

An Examination of Mississippi Teachers' Likelihood to Report Child Sexual Abuse and  
the Potential Effect on the Rates of Victim Disclosure

By:  
Marjorie Madeline Cox

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Approved By

---

Dr. Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham (Advisor)  
Coordinator of Secondary Education

---

Dr. Ann Monroe (Second Reader)  
Associate Professor of Teacher Education

---

Dr. Susan McClelland (Third Reader)  
Chair of Teacher Education

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This thesis is dedicated to

*the survivors and current victims of child sexual abuse. Your stories will be told. You will be heard. You are not alone.*

*the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program. Without the guidance and opportunities afforded to me over the last four years, I do not believe this thesis would be what it is today.*

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## ABSTRACT

### **An Examination of Mississippi Teachers' Likelihood to Report Child Sexual Abuse and the Potential Effect on the Rates of Victim Disclosure**

(Under the direction of Dr. Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham)

Within the last year alone, hundreds of news reports have swept the United States about the experiences of sexually abused children, shocking citizens with chilling accounts from both perpetrators and victims. Once their initial reaction plays out, many people resume their daily lives with little thought to the details or repercussions of the abuse; after all, incidents of that nature only befall other peoples' children. How does this secondary response affect child victims? Are children more or less likely to divulge their abuse with a societal response such as this? These are questions that the researcher sought to answer within the context of teachers and students in the state of Mississippi. The researcher distributed a survey to middle and high school teachers and undergraduate junior and senior education majors at the University of Mississippi to measure their attitudes and beliefs towards reporting child sexual abuse. Participants' responses showed a willingness to report child sexual abuse but an ignorance concerning the details of the legislation about professionals' duty to inform and immunity for reporters; the survey revealed how the difference in amount of experience between pre- and in-service educators influenced each groups' answers. Using the results of the survey and a review of the existing literature surrounding data on rates of victim disclosure, the researcher concluded that low victim-to-teacher disclosure rates is a result of both the relationships between teachers and students and the amount of child sexual abuse prevention and intervention training the educator has had.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System reports that rates of child sexual abuse have seen a decline since the 1990s, but the problem is still widely prevalent in today's society (Finkelhor and Jones, 2012). Advocates for child sexual abuse awareness have made leaps and bounds in research surrounding the issue and in efforts to spread awareness. Prevention training programs have been developed in recent years to reach both teachers and students of all ages, but the question regarding the appropriateness of such topics still remains; these programs broach sensitive subjects that not all parents or teachers feel comfortable discussing with young children. However, research experts agree that such courses are necessary for teachers and, with the added worry that victim disclosure rates have not improved, experts see all the more reason for teachers to enroll in such training. Thus, this research study presents the question: What are Mississippi teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward reporting child sexual abuse, and how do those perspectives and the implementation of prevention training potentially influence victim disclosure at the time of abuse?

The first section of the thesis will consist of a review of existing literature concerning child sexual abuse statistics, teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards reporting child sexual abuse, professional child sexual abuse prevention training for both teachers and students, as well as rates and characteristics of victim disclosure. The research used for this literature review will contain valid data collected through surveys or extensive

studies on the part of the researcher(s). Each study has been published either in reputable journals or online sources frequented for their reliable information on child sexual abuse.

The next section will contain the results of an online survey administered to currently employed teachers of grades 7, 8, and 9 within Lafayette County, Water Valley, and Pontotoc City School Districts as well as junior and senior education majors at the University of Mississippi. The survey used in this thesis was originally created and revised by Walsh et al in their study, “Teachers’ Attitudes toward Reporting Child Sexual Abuse: Problems with Existing Research Leading to New Scale Development.” The Likert-type survey retains its revised format as a twenty-one item self-reporting scale – ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” – in which participants measure their attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse.

The third and final segment will compare the results of the survey to the pre-existing literature on the topic of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes toward reporting child sexual abuse. It will also examine how teachers’ personal sense of preparedness potentially affects the rates of victim disclosure at the time of abuse. It will analyze how teachers’ potential inexperience with such situations can be solved with the implementation of child sexual abuse prevention and intervention professional development courses.

The Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated §43-21-105 defines child sexual abuse as

obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depiction of children for commercial purposes, or the rape, molestation, incest, prostitution, or other such

forms of sexual exploitation of children under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is threatened. (State of Mississippi Judiciary)

Existing research shows that child sexual abuse victims consist of 20 – 33% of girls and 10 – 16% of boys under the age of 18, with children being the most vulnerable between the ages of 8 and 12 (Hinkelman and Bruno, 2008). Despite the rates of child sexual abuse, data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System “show[s] a 62% decline in rates of substantiated sexual abuse starting in 1992 and continuing through 2010, with the largest drop occurring in the late 1990s” (Finkelhor and Jones, 2012). Data gathered from Child Protection Services, the National Incidence Survey, and self-report surveys indicate that there has been an increase in child disclosure to authority figures (Finkelhor and Jones, 2012). This increase may coincide with the decrease in child sexual abuse because the risk of perpetrator arrest and conviction becomes greater.

While Finkelhor and Jones's research centers around substantiated reports of sexual abuse, the child sexual abuse awareness advocacy organization Darkness to Light (2006) found that only about 4 – 8% of child sexual abuse reports are fabricated. “Substantiated abuse” simply means that all facts and evidence found during an investigation unequivocally determines that the child has faced sexual abuse at the hands of another; no case of sexual abuse is considered “substantiated” until such evidence has been collected and affirmed.

Darkness to Light approximates that 400,000 babies born in the United States will become victims of child sexual abuse. Of those 400,000, 30% of victims will be abused by members of their own family, 60% by trusted family friends, and only 10% by strangers (Darkness to Light, 2006). Due to the detrimental effect of sexual abuse on a

child's psyche, many victims report emotional or psychological distress or misbehavior as a result of their victimization. Kilpatrick, Saunders, and Smith (2003) found that 28.2% of male and 29.8% of female victims have experienced signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, substantiated reports of substance abuse amongst 34.4% of males and 27.5% of females, and 47.2% of males and 19.7% of females engage in some form of delinquency. The prolific emotional and psychological issues that stem from victimization affect the overall health and wellbeing of children well into adulthood, especially when their academic performance and behavior in school is taken into consideration.

While school personnel identify 52% of all child sexual abuse cases (Darkness to Light, 2006), less than 30% of suspicions are formally reported (Kenny, 2001). "Studies consistently show that teachers lack the knowledge and confidence to be effective reporters of child abuse and neglect, particularly of child and youth sexual abuse" (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2014). Many deterrents exist for teachers who are reluctant to report suspicions of child sexual abuse. Kenny (2001) names them as such: [1] insufficient knowledge on how to detect and report, [2] a fear of legal ramifications for false accusations, [3] the unknown consequences of reporting, [4] the fear of disapproval or denial from a child's parents, [5] the teacher's own personal beliefs and biases, as well as [6] the gender of the teacher – females are more likely to report than males – all have an impact on a teacher's potential to formally report. While a teacher's attitude toward reporting can change with time, experience, and education, that same attitude is a "latent feature of decision-making and potential determinant of the quality and accuracy of reports made to child protection authorities" (Walsh, 2010).

What many teachers do not understand is that each state has its own laws regarding the disclosure of sexual abuse suspicions. In fact, 24% of school personnel have never received any oral or written guidelines on the mandated reporting requirements of child sexual abuse for their state (Darkness to Light 8). In the state of Mississippi, the Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated explains citizens' Duty to Inform and their subsequent Immunity:

*Duty to Inform*, §43-21-353: Any person with cause to suspect shall cause an oral report to be made by phone or otherwise and followed by writing to the Department of Human Services... The identity of the person who reported his or her suspicion shall not be disclosed.

*Immunity*, §43-21-355: Any...person participating in the making of a required report pursuant to §43-21-353 or participating in the judicial proceeding resulting therefrom shall be presumed to be acting in good faith. Any person or institution reporting in good faith shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. (State of Mississippi Judiciary)

Two-thirds of teachers do not receive training in prevention, recognizing, or responding to suspicions of child sexual abuse in either college course work or professional development (Darkness to Light, 2006). Of those that have received some training, 40% described their pre-service training as “minimal,” and 34% said it was “inadequate” (Kenny, 2001). Goldman and Grimbeek (2014) found that “professionally guided scenarios with conceptual understanding of content, connections between learning and personal experiences, and evaluative procedures is helpful to move pre-service teachers toward confident practice.” Professional development and education courses are

essential as teachers play a pivotal role in prevention. According to Daro and Abrahams (1992), teachers can: offer guidance and support through strong student-teacher relationships, create an environment conducive to a student's wellbeing, and implement prevention curricula to foster safety awareness and self-protection skills.

Brassard and Fiorvanti (2015) state that successful prevention programs, cover a range of concepts and safety skills, involve didactic instruction, employ active behavioral skills training, and utilize video modeling. It is beneficial for programs to be integrated into the regular school curriculum, to be tailored to children's individual age groups and cognitive levels, and to include additional skill development in positive areas, such as assertiveness, problem-solving, and communication. (p. 41)

Such programs encourage children to ask questions about sensitive topics and potentially give a victim the courage to come forward and disclose their abuse.

Researcher Sally Hunter (2011) states,

Disclosure has been conceptualized as an interactive process with a pre- and post-disclosure stage; or as a dialogical process, normally between a child and a caregiver. Children will rarely disclose early sexual experiences without support. The adult needs to provide scaffolding for the child to enable this to take place as it is difficult for young children to initiate conversations about 'something secret, confusing, and distressful' that they may not fully understand. (p.167)

Research conducted by Collin-Vézina, Sablonnière-Griffin, Palmer, and Milne (2015) found that 55 – 69% of child sexual abuse victims did not disclose as children; in fact, 70 – 75% waited five or more years before disclosing their abuse. Victim reluctance to

disclose can be attributed to the negative impacts of disclosure, such as: not being believed, the worsening of a situation as a result of telling, gossip, or rifts/disruptions within the family (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015). Due to gender socialization, female victims are more likely to be afraid of admitting their victimization, while males are more likely to be ashamed about potential claims of homosexuality (Hunter, 2011).

A review of existing literature shows that today's teachers lack the necessary knowledge to detect and intervene in cases of child sexual abuse. This is a result of a lack of education and, in some cases, an unwillingness to intercede for fear of damaging repercussions. It is possible that most teachers are not committed to the required reporting role nor do they have confidence in a higher authority's ability to effectively respond to such reports. There is also a decided incompetence on the part of most teachers to form the necessary relationships that would allow for students to feel comfortable coming forward with their personal experiences, and teachers' shortage of professional training leads to greater nondisclosure rates in child sexual abuse victims. Research shows that many children do not disclose their abuse due to fear of not being believed or being ignored; inexperience on behalf of teachers only lends credit to those fears. However, child sexual abuse prevention and intervention training programs can allow teachers to build that relationship with their students that would permit the student to feel comfortable with acknowledging his or her abuse.



## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

### **§2.1: STATISTICS ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

The Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated §43-21-105 defines child sexual abuse as

obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depiction of children for commercial purposes, or the rape, molestation, incest, prostitution, or other such forms of sexual exploitation of children under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is threatened. (State of Mississippi Judiciary)

Existing research shows that child sexual abuse victims consist of 20 – 33% of girls and 10 – 16% of boys under the age of 18; children are the most vulnerable between the ages of 8 and 12, with the average beginning age falling at 9.9 for boys and 9.6 for girls (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). The child sexual abuse awareness advocacy organization Darkness to Light (2006) reported that 70% of sexual assault victims were under the age of 17, making the assault rate for youths 2.3 times higher than that for adults. Research by Kilpatrick, Saunders, and Smith (2003) revealed that African American and Native American adolescents were victimized more than Caucasians, Hispanics, and Asian Americans; however, African American and Native American children are significantly overrepresented in the child protection system in the United States (Fontes and Plummer, 2010). There are multiple contributing causes of this disproportionality, which include: disproportionate poverty, institutional racism, high rates of neighborhood crime and deterioration in some minority communities, pervasive

joblessness, and impoverished access to protective formal and informal systems such as neighborhood networks and quality healthcare (Fontes and Plummer, 2010). Katerndahl, Burge, Kellogg, and Parra (2005) found more of a correlation between acculturation level and reporting of child sexual abuse than with ethnicity itself and reporting. In examining specific groups more carefully, differences in how the abuse happened and how secrecy is maintained were revealed. Some studies show that Hispanic victims may be more likely to live with their perpetrator or to be abused by a parental figure than are non-Hispanic Whites or African Americans.

Darkness to Light (2006) found that children living with both biological parents are at low risk of sexual abuse. Children with a single parent who has a live-in partner are twenty times more prone to victimization; youths with parents not in the labor force are three times more likely to be sexually abused than youths with parents who work. Families in low socioeconomic classes are three times more liable to have children that are victims of sexual abuse; those who live in rural areas are twice as likely.

Using state-level panel data, Paxson and Waldfogel (2002) found that socioeconomic circumstances - in particular, income, parental work status, and single parenthood - affect the incidence of child maltreatment. "Increases in the fraction of children living below 75% of the poverty line are associated with higher rates of child maltreatment, as are higher shares of children with absent fathers, especially those with absent fathers and working mothers, and higher shares of children with non-working fathers" (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2002, p. 465). "Neighborhoods with the highest poverty rates have sexual abuse reporting rates four times higher than neighborhoods with the lowest poverty rates" (Oshima, Jonson-Reid, Seay, 2014, p. 370). Children living in

poverty may respond to offers of food, candy, or toys by their perpetrators. Perpetrators may use a child's economic vulnerability to gain access and keep the child from disclosing the abuse. Some families living in poverty may allow the sexual abuse of their children for financial compensation. (Fontes, 1993)

Rural areas present special problems for victims of child sexual abuse, and often for the same reasons: geographic isolation, lack of means to escape, and lack of anonymity. All of these are factors that exacerbate the difficulty of reporting child sexual abuse (Sudderth, 2003). In addition, there is evidence that "the lack of childcare options in rural areas creates opportunities for molestation. Lack of public transportation combined with greater distances to local law enforcement agencies or treatment providers hinders reporting child sexual victimization to authorities, which in turn, makes documentation of the crime more difficult. There is also some evidence that sexual assault is underreported in rural areas because victims are more likely to know their offenders" (Sudderth, 2003, p.19).

### **Negative Effects of Sexual Abuse**

Many victims of child sexual abuse report emotional or psychological distress or misbehavior as a result of their victimization. The following factors affect the consequences of child sexual abuse: [1] the child's age and developmental status at the time of the abuse; [2] the type of maltreatment; [3] the frequency, duration, and severity of the abuse; [4] the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013b). Many child sexual abuse victims experience physical, behavioral, emotional, and interpersonal symptoms. They suffer from frequent stomach

aches or headaches, difficulty standing or sitting, sexually transmitted diseases, and early pregnancy; victims may also develop somatization disorders, gynecological problems, and gastrointestinal distress. As they age, victims are more likely to run away from home, refuse to participate in physical activities, have an increased awareness of sexuality compared to their peers, or engage in inappropriate sex play with others (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008).

Research shows that gender differences are often expressed through the victim's tendency to internalize or externalize his or her symptoms. Girls are far more likely to internalize through self-blame or self-deprecation, often engaging in suicidal ideation or behaviors – such as self-mutilation – as well as eating disorders. Boys may participate in more delinquent activities such as substance abuse and risky sexual behavior (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Kilpatrick et al. (2003) discovered that 28.2% of male and 29.8% of female victims have experienced signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, substantiated reports of substance abuse amongst 34.4% of males and 27.5% of females, and 47.2% of males and 19.7% of females engage in some form of delinquency (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008).

Darkness to Light (2006) reports that victims of child sexual abuse are more likely to engage in prostitution. Female victims of sexual abuse are 2.2 times more likely to become teen mothers, with 45% reporting a history of child sexual abuse. However, only 11-13% of those reports indicate that the pregnancy is a direct result of the abuse. Male victims are more likely to impregnate; they have a much stronger risk factor for teen pregnancy than girls.

Child sexual abuse can have a “severe and lasting effect on the development and growth of one’s personal identity and feelings of competence and self-worth” (Hinkelman and Bruno, 2008, p. 384). Many victims suffer from increased anxiety and feelings of guilt or shame, betrayal and powerlessness, and confusion; as a result, they may develop “negative coping skills for dealing with stress, which can generalize into deficits in overall problem-solving skills and self-concept as the victims age” (Hinkelman and Bruno, 2008, p. 384). The trauma of the abuse may trigger nightmares, a preference for aggressive play, or difficulty with interacting appropriately with peers, teachers, and family members. Child sexual abuse has an indirect correlation to rates of teen suicide, teen runaways, and teen births (Finkelhor & Jones, 2012).

The prolific emotional and psychological issues that stem from victimization affect the overall health and wellbeing of children well into adulthood, especially when their academic performance and behavior in school is taken into consideration. “If children’s mental health has been damaged by sexual abuse, their achievement will be affected negatively unless they receive treatment” (Hinkelman and Bruno, 2008, p. 384). McGuire and London (2017) found that 70% of physicians believe that decreased school performance would be associated with child sexual abuse. Child victims may emotionally withdraw from their peers and seem passive or uninterested in classroom activities. Most score lower on tests of academic achievement, cognitive development, and memory; boys demonstrate lower school performance than girls (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Darkness to Light (2006) found that 39% of girls had academic difficulties: 50% of female victims were more likely to display cognitive ability below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile; 26% reported grades dropping after abuse, and 48% had below average grades. Both males and females

face an increased chance of dropping out of school completely; however, in some cases, child victims may take on the role of the overachiever or the perfectionist as a way to cope with the strain brought on by the abuse (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008).

Darkness to Light (2006) approximates that 400,000 babies born in the United States will become victims of child sexual abuse. Of those 400,000, 30% of victims will be abused by members of their own family, 60% by trusted family friends, and only 10% by strangers. However, despite the apparent prevalence of child sexual abuse, data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System “show[s] a 62% decline in rates of substantiated sexual abuse starting in 1992 and continuing through 2010, with the largest drop occurring in the late 1990s” (Finkelhor & Jones, 2012, p. 1). “Substantiated abuse” simply means that all facts and evidence found during an investigation unequivocally determines that the child has faced sexual abuse at the hands of another; no case of sexual abuse is considered “substantiated” until such evidence has been collected and affirmed. While Finkelhor and Jones’s research centers around substantiated reports of sexual abuse, Darkness to Light (2006) found that only about 4 – 8% of child sexual abuse reports are fabricated. The drop in rates of abuse could be due to changed standards, less funding for investigation, or exclusion of certain categories of victims or offenders; however, the “convergence of multiple independent data sources leads to a conclusion that a decline has likely occurred” (Finkelhor and Jones, 2012, p. 6).

## **§2.2: STATISTICS ON THE RATES OF VICTIM DISCLOSURE**

The concept of disclosure is difficult to comprehend due to a lack of specificity and variation of use for the term (Alaggia, 2004). However, Hunter (2011, p. 159)

defined disclosure as, “the process of telling an adult about an incident of child sexual abuse,” which is the definition which will be followed throughout this report. Collin-Vézina et al. (2015) found that 55-69% of child sexual abuse survivors did not disclose as children; 70-75% of survivors waited five or more years before reporting to friends, family, or therapists. “A child’s self-disclosure of sexual abuse is a critical component in initiating intervention to halt the abuse, address its immediate effects, and decrease the likelihood of negative long-term outcomes” (Alaggia, 2004, p. 1214).

Disclosure has been conceptualized as an interactive process with a pre- and post-disclosure stage; or as a dialogical process, normally between a child and a caregiver. Children will rarely disclose early sexual experiences without support. The adult needs to provide scaffolding for the child to enable this to take place as it is difficult for young children to initiate conversations about ‘something secret, confusing, and distressful’ that they may not fully understand (Hunter, 2011, p. 167).

According to Bruck et al. (2008), in most cases, the child’s statement is the sole evidence by which the validity or likelihood of the allegations is evaluated. “In the absence of reliable medical evidence or corroborative eyewitness testimony, the diagnosis of child sexual abuse is complicated because psychological and medical profiles do not reliably differentiate between abused and non-abused children” (Bruck et al., 2008, p. 29). This is due to the fact that many psychological behaviors that result from abuse are also present in non-abused children, and many types of sexual abuse do not leave physical evidence. This leads to two main concerns: a majority of victims do

not disclose; and the investigative use of techniques to elicit allegations is suggestive and associated with a risk of false allegations or memories.

Two broad dimensions of disclosure have been named by Collin-Vézina et al. (2015): agency – child-initiated disclosure versus detection by a third party – and temporal duration, which involves multiple dynamics – the victim actively withholds the secret, experiences the wish to tell and the wish to keep it secret before he or she eventually confides in a person with whom he or she has a trusted relationship. During her research, Ramona Alaggia (2004) re-established three types of disclosure but found that three more types emerged in her research, all of which have been compiled in Table 1. Included below is an “expanded conceptualization of disclosure” in which the types of disclosure are grouped into four larger categories [Figure 1] (Alaggia 2004).



**TABLE 1**  
**Types of Disclosure**

<b>Types of Disclosure</b>	<b>Description / Definition</b>
Purposeful	Intentional disclosure of the sexual abuse through direct verbal means
Accidental	Third party detection through witnessing, physical evidence, and symptoms, which results in a verification of abuse
Elicited / Prompted	Disclosure through investigative interviewing, counseling, art, play or talk therapy, supportive environments
Behavioral	Victim intentionally attempts to tell through behavior, non-verbal communications, or indirect verbal hints
Purposefully Withheld	Despite opportunities or interventions to disclose, the victim chooses not to tell; includes false denial
Triggered	Disclosure precipitated by recall of heretofore forgotten or repressed memories of the sexual abuse

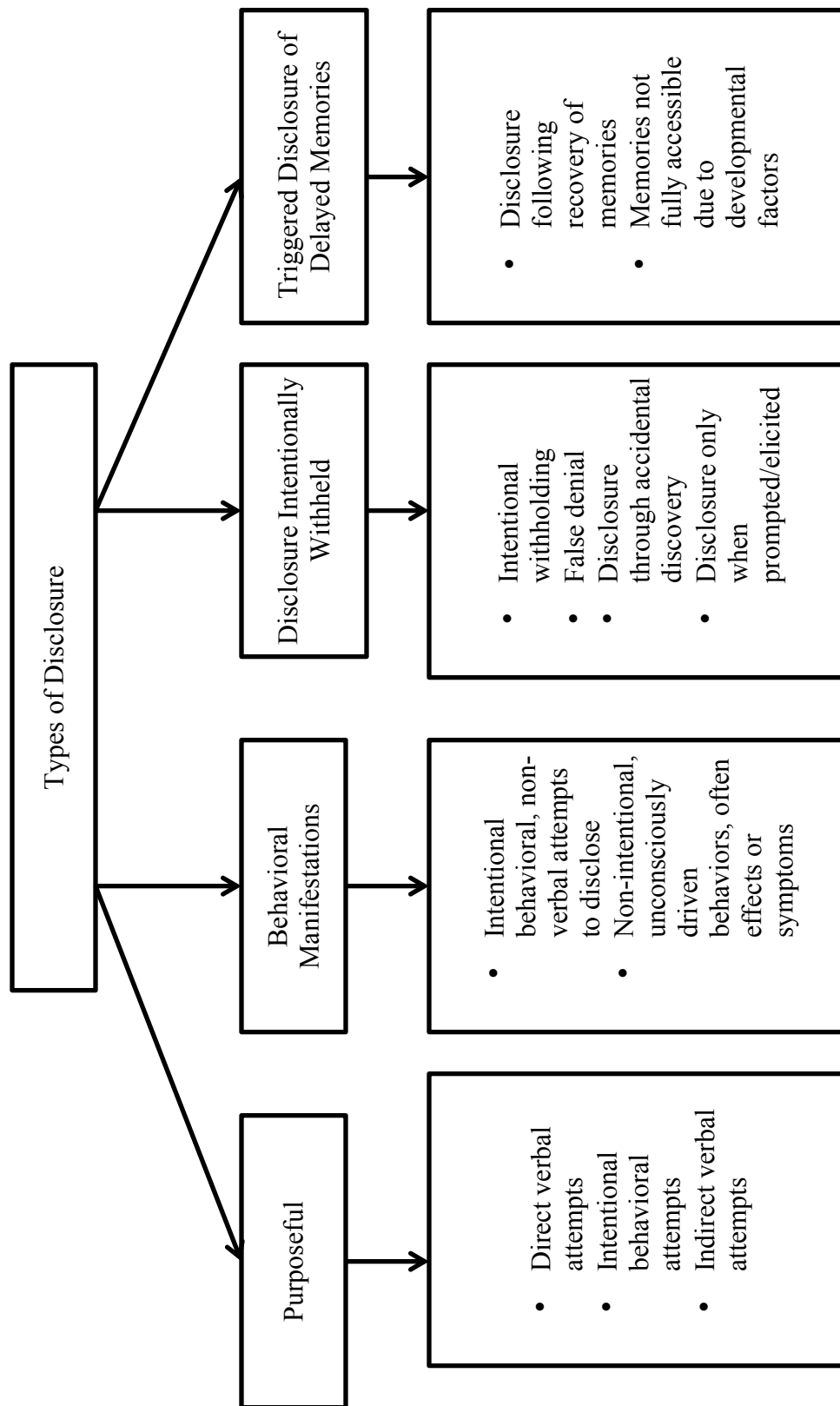


Figure 1: Expanded Framework of Disclosure Types

Collin-Vézina (2015) name three types of barriers that victims face when considering disclosure: barriers from within, barriers in relation to others, and barriers in relation to the social world. They are described in further detail below.

### **Barriers from Within:**

Internalized victim blaming is a large deterrent to reporting as it “encompasses experiences of embarrassment and shame, often related to self-blame and feeling responsible for the abuse” (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 128). One victim admitted in his interview, “I kind of wanted to say [what I was rebelling against] but you know...I still firmly believed that I had gotten myself into the situation, and it was my fault you know. That was the biggest barrier...I felt like I should have known better” [P65, M, 35] (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 128). Internal barriers often lead to self-coping mechanisms, which – as stated above – ultimately cause a total repression of memories of the abuse. Researchers found that older children have higher rates of disclosure than younger victims; they credit this to “immature development at the time of the abuse” (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 129). This refers to

the survivors’ recollections of being ill-equipped when the abuse occurred to fully comprehend the situation, which hampered their capacity and willingness to tell. These experiences included a lack of understanding of sexuality, confusion about the abuse, and potential outcomes of telling. (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 129)

### **Barriers in Relation to Others:**

Victims are well aware that telling could lead to negative reactions from others – such as blame, anger, and rejection.

“(There) were four or five of them in there (an office at the school), including the school principal...a police officer at the door...asking me all kinds of questions...I remember my parents being brought up...and I was told to sign a piece of paper...stating that they know...were aware...and it scared me half to death, and I thought my parents were going to be arrested. I thought that they were going to take my parents away so I said, ‘nothing’s happening to me, and I don’t know where you got your information from, but it’s all wrong’... ‘cause I just knew that it was so bad.” [P62, F, 50] (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 130)

Power dynamics between perpetrator and victim include two forms of manipulation: grooming and direct threats, causing the victim to feel trapped in his or her situation. Dysfunction in the family can include situations where other forms of violence in the home contribute to feelings of being unsafe or a fear of escalation should the abuse come to light. Many victims also suffer from a fragile social network – they simply have no one to tell or feel that there is no one equipped to receive the disclosure – including parents and teachers. Said one survivor, “I just – I wish there had been someone to tell” [P59, F, 48] (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 130).

Collin-Vézina et al. (2015) found that a major deterrent to disclosure rests in the fact that victims fear the perceptions or reactions of others if they disclosed. Many people dread not being believed, the situation worsening as a result of telling, gossip, or a disruption within their family. Labeling also leads to a disinclination to report as it refers

to the “stigma attached to being seen or treated as a ‘victim’ and in seeking services for the abuse, or for resulting mental health challenges, and fear of being called ‘crazy’” (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 130). It is common for victims to introduce self-coping mechanisms to “minimize the abusive experience both consciously and unconsciously by convincing oneself that they can deal with it on their own or by repressing the memories altogether” (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 128). In an interview, one victim states,

“For me, and I’m sure it’s the case for lots of abused children is you...you withdraw from the outside world and you...you create this inside world that you’re living in. I wasn’t in contact with the outside world even when I was in high school...I wasn’t present in the class. I was in the class, but...I was in my own world. I wasn’t listening to the teacher or what was going on...and so for me, living like that, it was kind of safe... disconnecting from the outside world, being only in my inside world.” [P68, F, 42] (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 129)

### **Barriers in Relation to the Social World:**

Gender, relationship to perpetrator, and cultural considerations all play a part in victim disclosure (Alaggia, 2004). Female victims were more likely to be afraid of the perpetrator and societal retaliation; males were more likely to be ashamed. “Some men feared that the contact might have occurred because they had homosexual tendencies, that they might become homosexual as a result, or that they would be labeled or stigmatized as a homosexual” (Hunter, 2011, p. 163). These feelings in both males and females often increase in adolescence as the child begins to understand the situation and believes that he/she is responsible for failing to stop the abuse; this shame often declines as the victim

matures, increasing the likelihood of disclosure as an adult (Hunter, 2011). Collin-Vézina et al. (2015) interviewed child sexual abuse survivors; one stated, “You know, you’re not just exploited but exploitable, that there’s something...wrong with you that you would have...you would have attracted something like this to happen to you. (p.128)”

[Participant 47, Female, Age 44]

Research reveals that cultural opinions about sexuality, especially negative ones, heavily impact disclosure rates. In cultures that value preservation of the nuclear family, victims are more likely to remain silent if their perpetrator is a member of the immediate household (Alaggia, 2004). Probability of reporting decreases as the closeness between victim and offender increases (Bruck et al., 2008); a caregiver who doubles as a perpetrator leads to attachment issues, traumatic bonding, and increases the victim’s desire to protect the integrity of the family unit (Alaggia, 2004). Victims of color are unlikely to report their abuse, especially if the offender is white, due in part to longstanding societal oppression and racial discrimination. For example, Bruck et al. (2008) discovered that Caucasian females are far more likely to disclose than Latina, Puerto Rican, and African American girls.

Labeling, as previously defined, succeeds in deterring the victim from disclosing. A taboo of sexuality results in a lack of discussion about the topic in society and within the home and schools. “If I had known that there were predators out there and that adults can do this to children, even if it was like graphically explained to me...I know that if somebody had told me...” [P47, F, 44] (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 130). Many victims that were interviewed cited a lack of services available in mainstream education, as well as information about accessible services.

“No one even talked at our school. You know, that would be amazing, for people to give talks in schools to children and say, ‘If anyone is touching you here, that’s wrong and you don’t need to keep doing that, you have a voice and you gotta tell somebody.’” [P1, F, 42] (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015, p. 131)

### **§2.3: TEACHERS’ ROLE IN REPORTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

According to Gallagher-Mackay (2014), “strong research suggests that teachers’ relationships with students are not only inevitable but an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning, alongside high expectations and academic press” (p. 261). At the heart of schooling is the instructional triangle, which emphasizes the interactions and relationships that occur between teacher, learner, and content when the three interact in specific environments. These relationships provide teachers the opportunities to provide guidance and support to their students, allowing them to play a pivotal role in the prevention of child maltreatment (Daro et al., 1992). School personnel may identify 52% of child sexual abuse cases (Darkness to Light, 2006), but there is inadequate information about how many of those cases were initiated by student disclosure. All fifty states have mandatory reporting laws that require certain professionals, such as teachers, who work or come into contact with children to report suspected child maltreatment (Kesner & Robinson, 2002). Despite the essential role presented to educators, many hesitate to take a more active stand in reporting child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse.

Walsh et al. (2010) ascertained that “attitudes may be latent features of decision-making and potential determinants of the quality and accuracy of reports made to child protection services.” The likelihood of a teacher making a report rests on his or her

commitment to the reporting role, confidence in the system's effective response to reports, and concerns about the consequences of reporting (Walsh et al., 2012). Kelly Gallagher-Mackay (2014) extensively researched the paradox of non-compliance in relation to teachers' disregard of the federally mandated act of reporting suspicions of child sexual abuse despite the deeply personal relationships educators form with their students.

While [compliance] seems simple enough, it presents numerous challenges. First, a potential reporter has to be able to identify signs of abuse or neglect and make a judgment about whether what he or she observes raises a suspicion of maltreatment. Once a person has decided to report a suspicion, he or she must manage the awareness that a report has the power to define both a child and family in ways that are beyond the control of the reporter. A report has the potential to activate needed support or to unleash huge consequences for children and parents. It is very likely to result in stigma that may affect both parents and children. Even consciousness of the potential to report or to be reported has the power to shape behavior and interactions. (Gallagher-Mackay, 2014, p. 267)

These factors relate directly to a teacher's attitude toward reporting and, more generally, child abuse as an issue worth their attention. In a random sample of 440 educators, 61% of participants reported that child maltreatment was a major issue that deserved their attention, 37% indicated that it was important to some degree, and 2% admitted to thinking that it was not important at all (McIntyre, 1987). In addition, "professionals respond to child sexual abuse based on their education and experience with child sexual abuse cases, the age and gender of the child, and their attitudes toward



the victim and perpetrator” (Hinkelman and Bruno, 2008, 381); approximately 59% of mental health, law enforcement, and school professionals attribute some of the responsibility for the abuse to child victims (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008).

Research shows that, for many teachers, the deterrents to reporting consist mostly of a lack of confidence in their ability to detect the signs of abuse, an unwillingness to cause a rift in the victim’s family, and the potential for legal backlash over false allegations. In a sample of 563 elementary and middle school teachers, 63% cited a fear of legal ramifications. One teacher stated, “We are scared to death of being sued,” and another mirrored this sentiment, “Teachers are afraid to report questionable suspicions for fear of false information causing further or new problems” (Daro et al., 1992, p. 237). In light of this revelation, most states have instituted a policy that offers legal immunity to reporters believed to be acting in good faith.

Interventionary knowledge, skills, and competencies regarding child abuse and neglect should be taught to pre-service teachers; however, there is little literature that identifies *what* content pre-service teachers encounter. A review of existing literature lends itself to the conclusion that a combination of professionally guided scenarios including a conceptual understanding of content, connections between learning and personal experiences, and evaluative procedures is most helpful in moving pre-service teachers toward confident practice. Researcher Gail Zellman (1990, p. 2) states, “School staff often know children better than do most other mandated reporters... they can detect the small but significant changes in behavior that may signal child abuse. Moreover, school staff may be the only professionals involved with poor and rural families.” However, two-thirds of teachers do not receive training in preventing, recognizing, or

responding in either college coursework or professional development (Darkness to Light, 2006).

“Studies consistently show that teachers lack the knowledge and the confidence to be effective reporters of child abuse and neglect, particularly of child and youth sexual abuse” (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2014, p. 3). According to a survey distributed by Hinkelman and Bruno (2008) to a sample population of 200 teachers, only 34% had child sexual abuse prevention and intervention training and only 23% thought the education they received was adequate. “Teacher education degrees provide very few or no compulsory courses on child protection and crucially related, lifelong health and well-being issues” (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015, p. 1). Darkness to Light (2006) found that 24% of school personnel have never received any oral or written guidelines on the mandated reporting requirements of their state. Kenny (2001) found that less than 30% of suspected cases known to school personnel are formally reported; the perceived deterrents were as follows:

1. Insufficient knowledge on how to detect and report
2. Fear of legal ramifications for false accusations
3. Consequences of reporting
4. Fear of disapproval or denial from parents
5. Personal beliefs and biases
6. Gender (females are more likely to report than males)

As a result, public schools are the greatest single source of reports but still have more unreported cases than all other services combined (Kenny, 2001). Failure to report

can have serious consequences, such as child endangerment, violation of district rules, and possible jail time or license suspension (Underwood, 2016).

School professionals “make an appreciable contribution to the overall functioning of child protection systems, including the detection of child abuse” (Walsh et al., 2012, p. 490); however, 24% of school personnel have never received any oral or written guidelines on the mandated reporting requirements of their state (Darkness to Light, 2006). Teachers’ confidence can be raised through further training in the prevention and disclosing of child sexual abuse as many claim to have received very little pre-service training or professional development in the area and even fewer believe that such training was adequate. With time, context, experience, and education, teacher attitude toward reporting can change for the better.

#### **§2.4: TEACHER TRAINING AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE RATES OF VICTIM DISCLOSURE**

Public Law 93-247, otherwise known as the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA), was originally enacted on January 31, 1974 and most recently reauthorized and amended on December 20, 2010. This legislation “provides federal funding to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities and also provides grants to public agencies and non-profit organizations for demonstrations, programs, and projects” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011, p. 1). CAPTA identifies the federal role in supporting research, evaluation, technical assistance, and data collection activities. This act also established the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect and mandates the Child Welfare Information Gateway.

CAPTA's description of child sexual abuse is considered the federal definition from which individual states drew their own definitions. It is as follows:

the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caregiver or interfamilial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children. (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013c, p. 4)

CAPTA established the child welfare system, which is a “group of services designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety, achieving permanency, and strengthening families to care for their children successfully” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013a, p. 1). The primary responsibility for these services rests with each state, but the federal government supports states through funding of programs and legislative initiatives. Child welfare systems typically [1] receive and investigate reports of possible child abuse, [2] provide services to families that need assistance in the protection and care of their children, [3] arrange for children to live with kin or foster families if they are not safe at home, and [4] arrange for reunification, adoption, or other permanent family connections for children leaving foster care (Child Welfare Information, 2013a).

The Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated legislation §43-21-353 dictates that Any attorney, physician, dentist, intern, resident, nurse, psychologist, social worker, family protection worker, family protection specialist, child caregiver,

minister, law enforcement officer, public or private school employee, or any other person having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or abused child, shall cause an oral report to be made immediately by telephone or otherwise and followed as soon thereafter as possible by a report in writing to the Department of Human Services, and immediately a referral shall be made by the Department of Human Services to the youth court intake unit... the identity of the person who reported his or her suspicion shall not be disclosed. (State of Mississippi Judiciary)

Interventionary knowledge, skills, and competencies regarding child abuse and neglect should be taught to pre-service teachers; however, there is little literature that identifies *what* content pre-service teachers encounter. A review of existing literature lends itself to the conclusion that a combination of professionally guided scenarios including a conceptual understanding of content, connections between learning and personal experiences, and evaluative procedures is most helpful in moving pre-service teachers toward confident practice. Researcher Gail Zellman (1990, p. 2) states, “School staff often know children better than do most other mandated reporters... they can detect the small but significant changes in behavior that may signal child abuse. Moreover, school staff may be the only professionals involved with poor and rural families.” However, two-thirds of teachers do not receive training in preventing, recognizing, or responding in either college coursework or professional development (Darkness to Light, 2006).

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6. Gender (females are more likely to report than males)

As a result, public schools are the greatest single source of reports but still have more unreported cases than all other services combined (Kenny, 2001). Failure to report can have serious consequences, such as child endangerment, violation of district rules, and possible jail time or license suspension (Underwood, 2016). While teachers are legally mandated reporters of child sexual abuse, they are granted some degree of immunity from any legal liability; according to Mississippi legislation §43-21-355, any person

participating in the making of a required report... or participating in the judicial proceeding resulting therefrom shall be presumed to be acting in good faith. Any person or institution reporting in good faith shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. (State of Mississippi Judiciary)

In a self-reporting survey distributed by McIntyre (1999), teachers determined their own awareness of the signs of child sexual abuse. The results were as follows: 4% were very aware; 17% were aware of obvious symptoms; and 76% would not recognize the signs. Only one-third of child sexual abuse cases are identified; school personnel report only 52% of these cases (Darkness to Light, 2006). Due to teachers' lack of faith in their own abilities to detect child sexual abuse, 73% of educators had never made a report to Child Protective Services; eight out of forty-four admit to failing to report due to one of the perceived deterrents previously listed, despite 11% stating that there were times they suspected the potentiality of abuse (Kenny, 2001).

“Many view the schools as the logical hub of educational, health, and social services. In this view, the schools are or could become the natural broker of the multiple services necessary to meet children’s needs and to foster their development” (Zellman, 1990, p. 1). In order to do this, administrators and teachers must be properly prepared to detect the signs of child sexual abuse, subtle though some may be. According to Daro and Abrahams (1992), school administration should establish training programs that cover the following:

- Identification of child abuse and neglect

- Procedures in place within the school for fulfilling the state's reporting requirements
- Methods for effectively supporting maltreatment victims and their families, including referral to relevant treatment services in the community and establishment of peer support groups for victims
- Purpose and content of prevention curricula created for students.

McIntyre and Carr (1999) found that victims of child sexual abuse who had previously participated in a specific school-based prevention program were more likely to have reported to teachers and have those reports substantiated; however it is unknown if the actual risk or the likelihood of abuse is reported or even prevented despite the implementation of such programs (Brassard and Fiorvanti, 2015).

Successful programs were more likely to teach prevention skills through behavioral skills training. Specifically, students learned more and mastered skills better when the training involved the students engaging in active rehearsal, followed by shaping and reinforcement, as compared with passive learning, such as watching the presenter model skills, hearing a lecture, or viewing a film.

(Brassard and Fiorvanti, 2015, p. 41)

Such programs cover a range of concepts and safety skills, involve didactic instructions followed by group discussion, employ active behavioral skills training, and utilize video modeling. They are best integrated into the regular school curriculum, to be tailored to children's individual age groups and cognitive levels, and to include additional skill development in positive areas – such as assertiveness, problem-solving, and communication (Brassard and Fiorvanti, 2015). Research suggests that pre-school and



kindergarten students can learn self-protection skills and abuse concepts so long as the content is modified to make programs more age-appropriate through the inclusion of more family involvement, activities that focus on concrete concepts, and opportunities for practice and repetition (Brassard and Fiorvanti, 2015). Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that child abuse and neglect prevention strategies can save taxpayers approximately \$104 billion a year; the current lifetime cost of child maltreatment and related fatalities in one year totals \$124 billion (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013b).

A few of the more popular and well-received child sexual abuse prevention programs are the Stay Safe Program, Body Safety Training Program, and the Safe Child Program. Brassard and Fiorvanti (2015) reviewed each, and the results are listed below on Tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

**TABLE 2: Stay Safe Program**

<b>Stay Safe Program</b>	
<b>Positives</b>	<b>Negatives</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers reported better, more open relationships with students</li> <li>2. Modifications are provided for students with disabilities</li> <li>3. Acknowledges the importance of training all staff, not just teachers implementing the program</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lessons for younger children are basic, seemingly just setting the framework for later protective skill-building</li> </ol>

**TABLE 3: Body Safety Training Program**

<b>Body Safety Training Program</b>	
<b>Positives</b>	<b>Negatives</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Adequate repetition and practice time</li><li>2. Soliciting role-play ideas from students allows understanding of student thoughts and concerns; encourages them to come up with ideas for how to handle difficult situations</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Some depicted scenarios are controversial</li><li>2. May be challenging for teachers without additional assistance in the classroom</li><li>3. Minimal games and activities provided</li></ol>

**TABLE 4: Safe Child Program**

<b>Safe Child Program</b>	
<b>Positives</b>	<b>Negatives</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Easy to implement and lesson plans are highly scripted</li><li>2. Abundant opportunities for rehearsal</li><li>3. Inclusion of material on the prevention of physical/emotional abuse</li><li>4. Developmentally appropriate and easily adjustable</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Dated in terms of visual presentation, music, facts, and statistics</li><li>2. Roleplaying is very hands-on and may be very uncomfortable for facilitators</li></ol>

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **§3.1: FORMING A THESIS**

The idea to explore the topics found in this report originated in an education course under the tutelage of Dr. Ann Monroe. During one particular class, Dr. Monroe questioned her undergraduate students about their knowledge of teachers' roles as mandatory reporters. When only a few students indicated having pre-existing knowledge, Dr. Monroe proceeded to instruct the class about the very basics of mandatory reporting before moderating a discussion centered on the detection of and intervention in cases of child sexual abuse; this conversation inspired research into teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse, as well as disclosure rates among child sexual abuse survivors.

The question that this report focuses on did not come into being until several weeks of researching had passed; the researcher noticed patterns in the literature in how teachers treated mandatory reporting and student survivors' comments about a lack of confidants. As teachers admitted to ignorance concerning the mandatory reporting laws, as well as prevention and intervention techniques, a similar number of child sexual abuse survivors admitted to not trusting their teachers enough to confide in them. How *do* teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse potentially affect their behavior in a classroom in which a student is being abused? Is the student more likely to disclose their abuse if their teacher is open about such topics?

### **§3.2: FINDING A SURVEY**

After reading an article published in the *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* by Walsh et al. (2010), the researcher chose to use the newly designed twenty-one item Likert-type format survey to measure teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse, "Twenty-One Item Self-Report Teachers' Reporting Attitude Scale for Child Sexual Abuse In Relation to Reporting Child Sexual Abuse, to What Extent do you Agree or Disagree With the Following Statements?" that was created by Walsh et al. (2010) (Appendix A). Scale development for this survey consisted of "a five-phase process grounded in contemporary attitude theories, including [1] developing the initial item pool, [2] conducting a panel review, [3] refining the scale via an expert focus group, [4] building content validity through cognitive interviews, and [5] assessing internal consistency via field testing" (Walsh et al., 2010, p. 310). At the time of research, this particular survey was the most recent to measure teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse and represents a significant theoretical and empirical advance over previous work in this field.

Since the survey has only been recently developed, Walsh et al. (2010) make note of limitations of the study:

An important key psychometric index omitted from the process was a measure of the new scale's test-retest reliability. Without this measure of temporal stability, the utility of the scale cannot be thoroughly assessed. The test was not omitted by design but in consideration of the burden on the pilot school and in an attempt to reduce the study's conflict with important core curricular activities. This can be acknowledged as a shortcoming, and future work with this scale must incorporate

measures of test-retest reliability. However, it should also be noted that conducting such a study in a school environment may prompt teachers to think about or reflect on the core construct, discuss it or research it, and perhaps even change their attitudes toward it. A further limitation was that the sample of experts who participated in the panel review, focus group, and cognitive interviews were predominantly female. In this respect, they may not be representative of the broader range of expertise in the field. (p. 329)

Despite these limitations, the researcher chose to proceed with the survey because it was the most recently developed scale of its kind that was found. Initial testing on the part of Walsh et al. (2010) proved successful enough for the researcher to believe that it would be effective in small-scale research.

Ultimately, no changes were made to the content of the survey; however, additional questions created by the researcher regarding participants' demographics were added to a section preceding the survey (Appendix A). These questions differed slightly for pre-service and in-service teachers. If they so desired, participants had the option to choose "prefer not to answer" on any given question pertaining to personal information. In order to protect participants' privacy, all results of the survey are anonymous. The survey was disseminated through Qualtrics, a University of Mississippi-sanctioned survey software platform.

### **§3.3: DISTRIBUTION OF THE SURVEY & PARTICIPANT RESPONSE RATES**

#### **In-service Teachers**

Once the survey was chosen and edited, the researcher submitted it, recruitment letters, and a consent to participate form (Appendix B) to the University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board for approval, which was granted after committee appraisal. The researcher selected four middle schools and five high schools to potentially participate in the study. These schools were chosen for their proximity to Oxford, MS – the researcher's primary residence during the duration of the study; they are all within fifty miles of the city and of varying socioeconomic statuses. After establishing initial contact with the schools' principals through a recruitment email, only two middle schools and three high schools remained. Schools were eliminated either because the principal refused the researcher permission to contact his or her employees, or the principal declined to respond to both the first email and the follow-up telephone call. Two teachers – one from a high school and the other from a middle school – approached the researcher independently and expressed interest in contributing to the study; this brought the total number of participatory schools to three middle schools and four high schools.

Once the researcher received approval from the school principal, a recruitment email was sent to teachers of all content areas for grades 7-9. As stated in the literature review, research shows that child sexual abuse victims consist of 20 – 33% of girls and 10 – 16% of boys under the age of 18; children are the most vulnerable between the ages of 8 and 12, with the average beginning age falling at 9.9 for boys and 9.6 for girls (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Children in seventh grade are at the far end of the most vulnerable age; if abuse is occurring, students in grades eight and nine are far more likely

to disclose than their younger counterparts, since research has shown that older children have higher rates of disclosure (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015). Therefore, teachers in grades 7-9 might have more experience with purposeful or behavioral disclosures.

If teachers who received the recruitment email from the researcher were amenable to participating in the study, they followed the link provided in the email to the Qualtrics survey uploaded by the researcher. Of the 141 middle and high school teachers contacted, 58 responded – a return rate of 0.4113 (41%).

### **Pre-Service Teachers**

The survey was also distributed to 250 junior and senior education majors at the University of Mississippi. Only juniors and seniors were sent the email since education majors do not begin their methodology classes until junior year. In order to gain permission to disseminate the survey amongst undergraduates, the researcher contacted Dr. Susan McClelland, the Chair of the Department of Teacher Education, who gave her approval and referred the researcher to the Student Advising and Field Experience Office (SAFE Office), which acts as a mediator between School of Education faculty and education majors when mass emails need to be dispersed. Shortly after contacting the SAFE Office, the survey was distributed amongst the target population.

While the survey was not sent to elementary in-service teachers, undergraduate elementary majors received the survey. This decision was purposeful; elementary education majors enroll in many methodology and law classes different from those taken by undergraduates studying secondary education. By including a question about the type of degree the participant was receiving, the researcher was able to determine if

elementary majors felt more or less comfortable or secure in their attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse than secondary majors.

The rationale behind sending the survey to undergraduates seeking a degree in education was to establish if pre-service teachers were being exposed to the necessary information regarding detecting and reporting child sexual abuse amongst their future students. A total of 250 undergraduates received the survey; of those, only 67 responded – a return rate of 0.268 (27%).



## **Chapter IV: Survey Analysis**

### **§4.1: RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

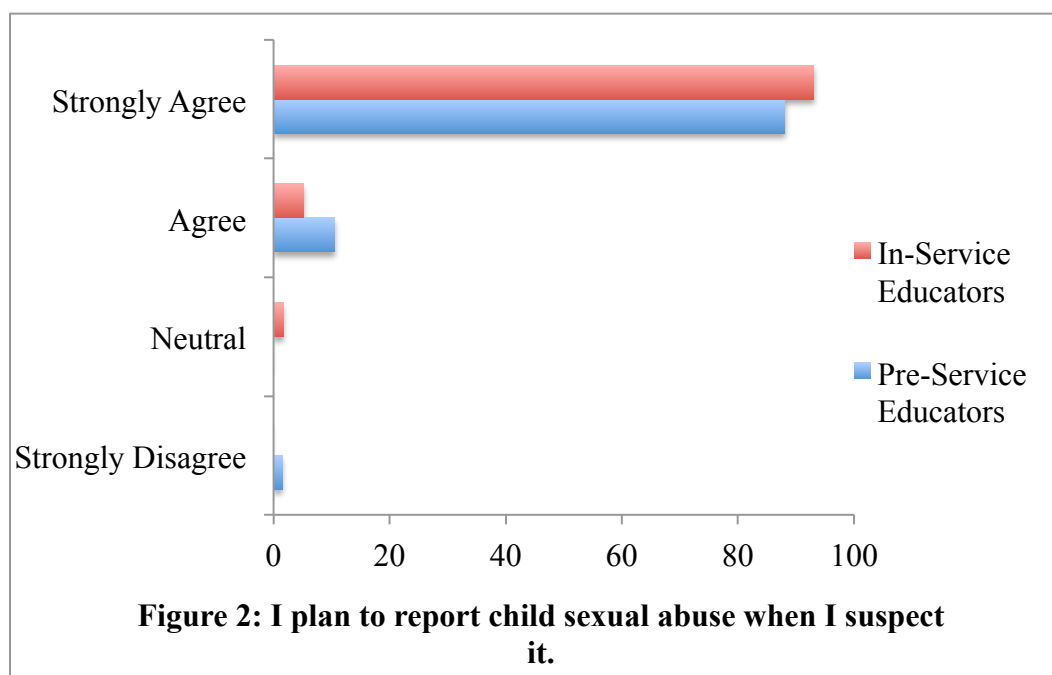
The purpose of this study was to evaluate how teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse potentially affect rates of victim disclosure to teachers. After approval was received from the University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board, the researcher distributed a survey to two middle schools and three high schools, earning a response rate of 41%. The survey was also dispersed to 250 undergraduate elementary and secondary education majors through the University of Mississippi's School of Education's Student Advising and Field Experience Office; the researcher received a response rate of 27%. The survey acted as a measuring tool to determine both pre-service and in-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse. The survey used was adopted from research conducted by Walsh et al. (2010) entitled, "Twenty-One Item Self-Report Teachers' Reporting Attitude Scale for Child Sexual Abuse In Relation to Reporting Child Sexual Abuse, to What Extent do you Agree or Disagree With the Following Statements?" (Appendix A) The researcher relied on a review of existing literature to ascertain how those attitudes and beliefs would affect rates of student-victim disclosures.

## **§4.2: TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AND KNOWLEDGE OF LEGISLATION PERTAINING TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

This section will assess and compare pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about and knowledge of mandatory reporting laws and the protections they are guaranteed under legislation. The statements below were pulled from the survey for their relation to the Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated §43-21-353 and §43-21-355. The results of the survey distributed by the researcher are described below.

### **Statement 4.2.1: I plan to report child sexual abuse when I suspect it. (Figure 2)**

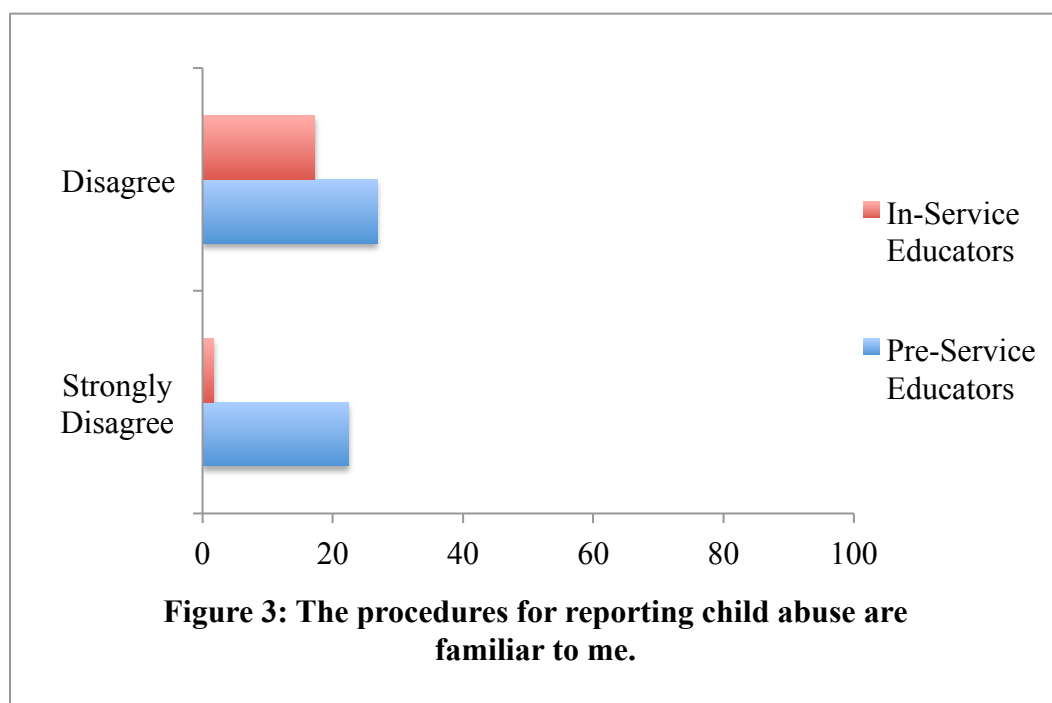
According to the results of the survey distributed to pre-service teachers, 88.06% of participants “Strongly Agree” to the statement above; 10.45% “Agree”; and 1.49% “Strongly Disagree.” Similarly, in-service teachers reported 93.10% “Strongly Agree”; 5.17% “Agree”; and 1.72% are “Neutral.”



**Statement 4.2.2: The procedures for reporting child abuse are familiar to me.**

**(Figure 3)**

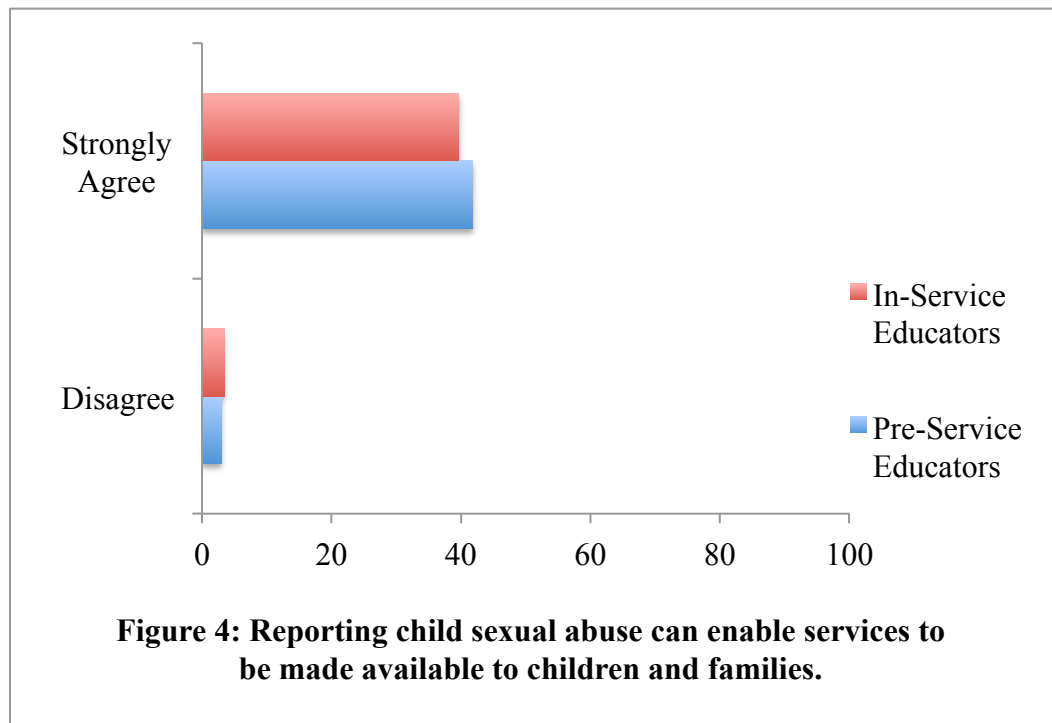
While most of the pre-service teachers that were surveyed are eager to fulfill their professional duty as a mandatory reporter, 26.87% of participants “Disagree” and 22.39% “Strongly Disagree” that they have the necessary knowledge to report child abuse. Conversely, only 1.72% of in-service teachers “Strongly Disagree,” and 17.24% “Disagree.”



**Statement 4.2.3: Reporting child sexual abuse can enable services to be made available to children and families. (Figure 4)**

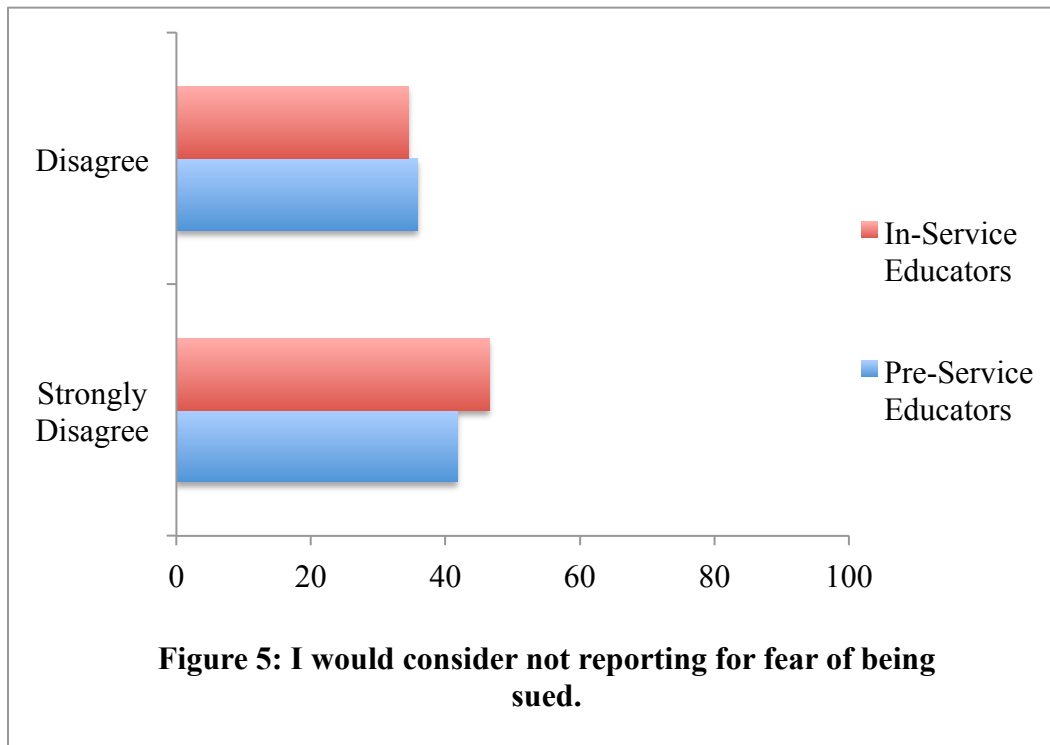
41.79% of pre-service teachers and 39.66% of in-service teachers “Strongly Agree” with this statement; additionally, only 2.99% of pre-service teachers and 3.45%

of in-service teachers “Disagree” that services would be made available to children and families.



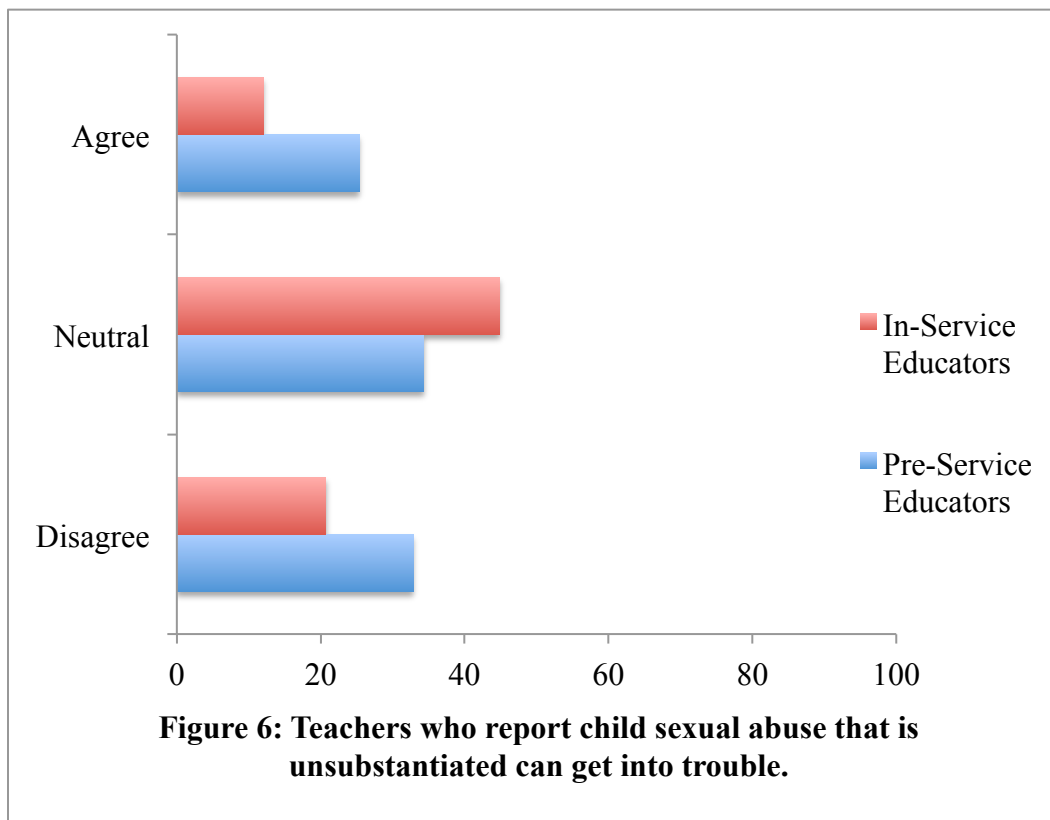
**Statement 4.2.4: I would consider not reporting for fear of being sued. (Figure 5)**

Pre-service and in-service teachers responded similarly to this statement; of the twenty-seven pre-service participants, 41.79% “Strongly Disagree” and 35.82% simply “Disagree.” Comparably, 46.55% of in-service teachers “Strongly Disagree” and 34.48% “Disagree.”



**Statement 4.2.5: Teachers who report child sexual abuse that is unsubstantiated can get into trouble. (Figure 6)**

Responses from pre-service teachers were spread out nearly equally between “Agree” (25.37%), “Neutral” (34.33%), and “Disagree” (32.84%). However, in-service teachers overwhelmingly responded either “Neutral” (44.83%) or “Disagree” (20.69%).



## Discussion

The above statements were extracted from the survey because the participants' responses would have been influenced by their pre-existing knowledge of the Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated §43-21-353 and §43-21-355. These particular pieces of legislation pertain to the mandatory duty to inform and legal immunity, respectively. Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated §43-21-353 states,

Any attorney, physician, dentist, intern, resident, nurse, psychologist, social worker, family protection worker, family protection specialist, child caregiver, minister, law enforcement officer, public or private school employee, or any other person having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or

abused child, shall cause an oral report to be made immediately by telephone or otherwise and followed as soon thereafter as possible by a report in writing to the Department of Human Services, and immediately a referral shall be made by the Department of Human Services to the youth court intake unit... the identity of the person who reported his or her suspicion shall not be disclosed. (State of Mississippi Judiciary)

This legislation ensures that any professional or – as stated in Mississippi law – citizen of the state of Mississippi over the age of 18 are mandated reporters; thus, they *must* file a report of child abuse and neglect, so long as there is reasonable cause for their suspicions. Embedded in this law is the security of anonymity of the reporter, should he or she wish it. This statute also states, “a referral shall be made by the Department of Human Services to the youth court intake unit” (State of Mississippi Judiciary); the youth court may order the Department of Human Services or the Department of Youth Services to conduct an investigation into the child and his or her environment (State of Mississippi Judiciary). If the pre-service and in-service teachers who participated in the survey were truly knowledgeable of the laws of the state in which they teach, then they should have had no issue reporting either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” to Statements 1-3 listed above.

According to the results received, the responses to Statements 1 and 3 correspond with the researcher’s expectations, with 88.06% of pre-service and 93.10% of in-service teachers choosing “Strongly Agree” to Statement 1, “I plan to report child sexual abuse when I suspect it.” Similarly, 41.79% of pre-service and 39.66% of in-service teachers “Strongly Agree” to Statement 3, “Reporting child sexual abuse can enable services to be made available to children and families.”

The researcher expected the response garnered from pre-service teachers in regards to Statement 2, “The procedures for reporting child abuse are familiar to me.” According to existing literature, there is little done to prepare undergraduate education majors to prevent, detect, or intervene in cases of child sexual abuse. Over half (64.19%) of pre-service participants responded negatively or neutrally to Statement 2, while an overwhelming majority (81.03%) of in-service teachers responded positively or neutrally. This gap can most likely be attributed to the amount of experience between in-service and pre-service teachers; those currently working in education are more likely to have either dealt with a case of child sexual abuse, participated in a professional development course in which child abuse and neglect was the subject, or both.

Statements 4 and 5 pertain to Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated §43-21-355, which states that any person

participating in the making of a required report... or participating in the judicial proceeding resulting therefrom shall be presumed to be acting in good faith. Any person or institution reporting in good faith shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. (State of Mississippi Judiciary)

Familiarity with this law should have guided participants to select “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree” for Statement 4, “I would consider not reporting for fear of being sued,” as well as Statement 5, “Teachers who report child sexual abuse that is unsubstantiated can get into trouble.” This law grants legal immunity to reporters, so long as the reporter is believed to be acting in good faith. All that is needed to report child abuse and neglect is



reasonable cause; the state of Mississippi does not require the reporter to have substantiated evidence before an investigation is launched.

Survey data for Statement 4 shows an understanding of this legislation on the parts of both pre- and in-service educators; if they truly were not familiar with this law, their responses show a willingness to sacrifice their own reputation in court for the safety of a child. A majority of pre-service teachers (77.61%) report that they would still report, despite a fear of being sued. Similarly, in-service teachers answered either “Strongly Disagree” (46.55%) or “Disagree” (34.48%).

To provide an answer for Statement 5 that is in line with current legislation would have required actual knowledge of Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated §43-21-355. As evidenced by the responses of pre-service educators, there is a belief that reporting without substantiated abuse can result in harm being done to the reporter; their answers range nearly equally between “Agree” (25.37%), “Neutral” (34.33%), and “Disagree” (32.84%). A majority of in-service teachers replied with either “Neutral” (44.83%) or “Disagree” (20.69%). The dominant percentage of “Neutral” replies from both pre- and in-service educators shows a disconcerting uncertainty about the amount of legal immunity reporters receive as well as the difference between reporting in good faith with reasonable cause and reporting with substantiated evidence.

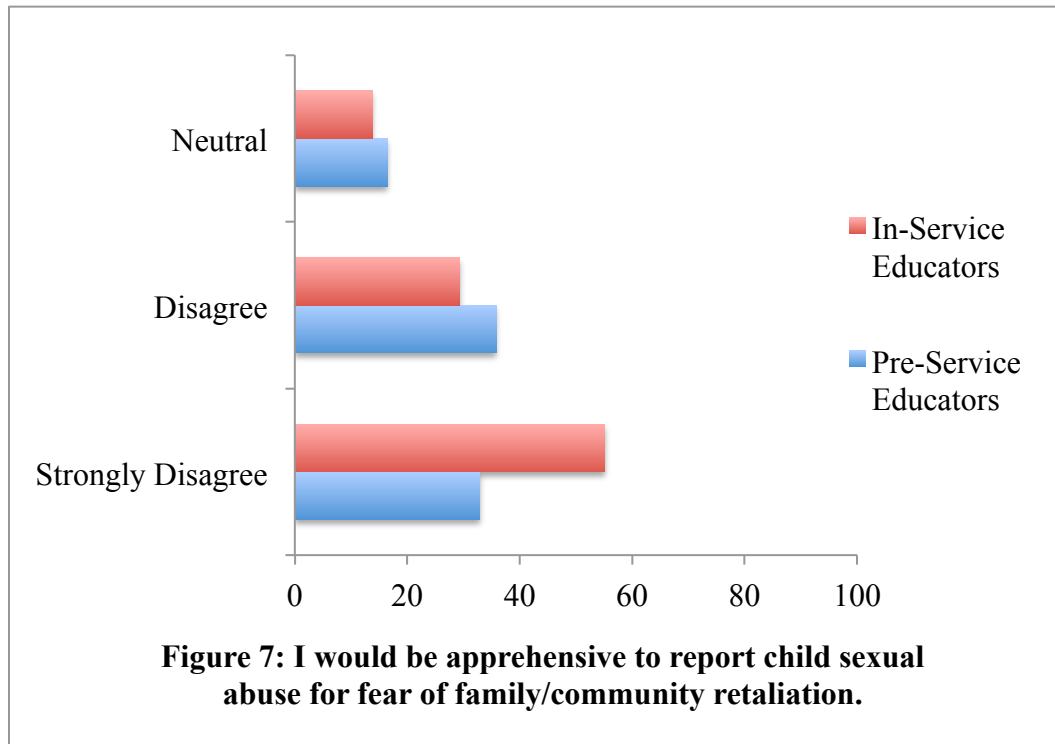
#### **§4.3: TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD REPORTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

The following statements are some of the few in the survey that pertain to teachers’ attitudes toward reporting child sexual abuse. For the purposes of this survey,

*attitude* was defined as, “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Walsh et al., 2012, p. 492).

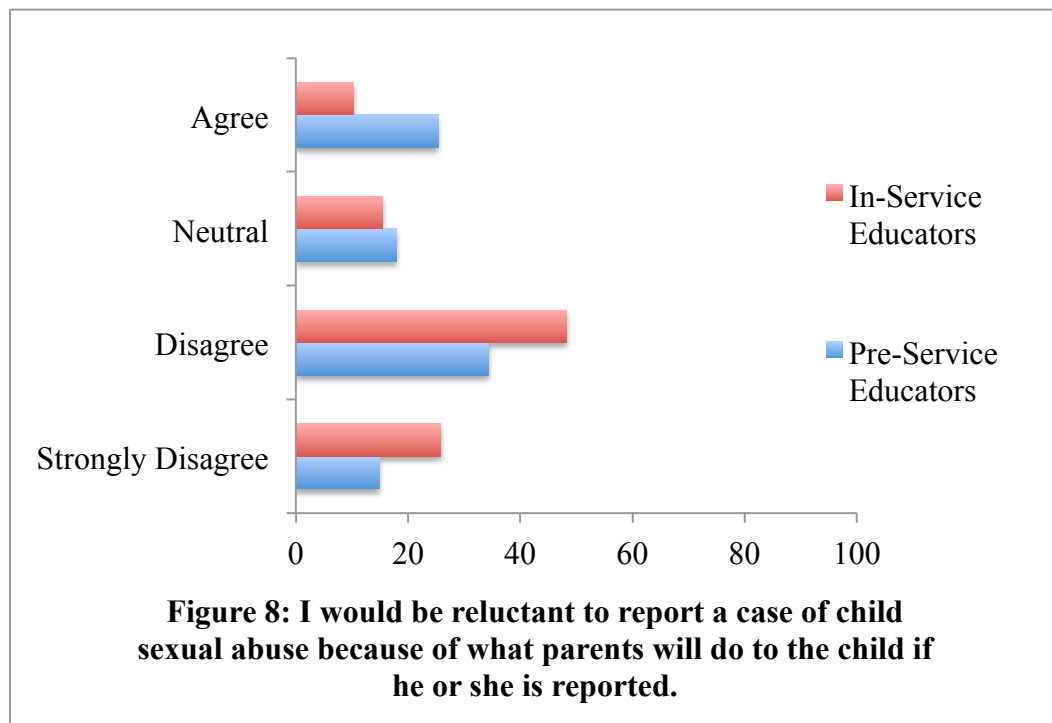
**Statement 4.3.1: I would be apprehensive to report child sexual abuse for fear of family/community retaliation. (Figure 7)**

Responses from pre-service teachers ranged predominantly from “Neutral” (16.42%), “Disagree” (35.82%), or “Strongly Disagree” (32.84%). Over one-half of in-service participants chose “Strongly Disagree” (55.17%); 29.31% of teachers “Disagree”, and 13.79% are “Neutral.”



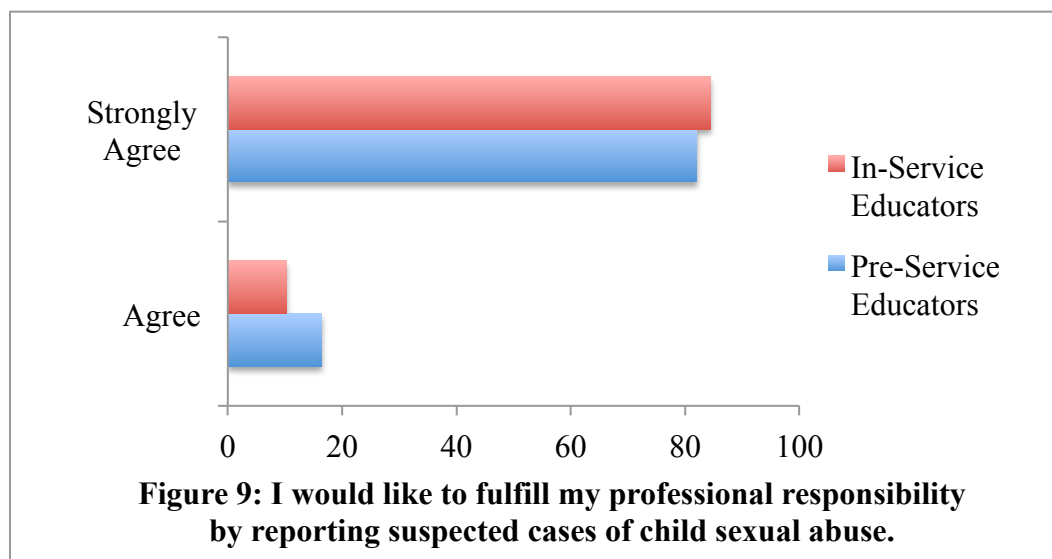
**Statement 4.3.2: I would be reluctant to report a case of child sexual abuse because of what parents will do to the child if he or she is reported. (Figure 8)**

For pre-service teachers, the results vary greatly: 7.46% “Strongly Agree”; 25.37% “Agree”; 17.91% were “Neutral”; 34.33% “Disagree”; and 14.93% “Strongly Disagree.” A majority (48.28%) of in-service teachers responded “Disagree”; 25.86% “Strongly Disagree.” The remaining participants chose either “Neutral” (15.52%) or “Agree” (10.34%). No in-service teachers reported “Strongly Agree.”



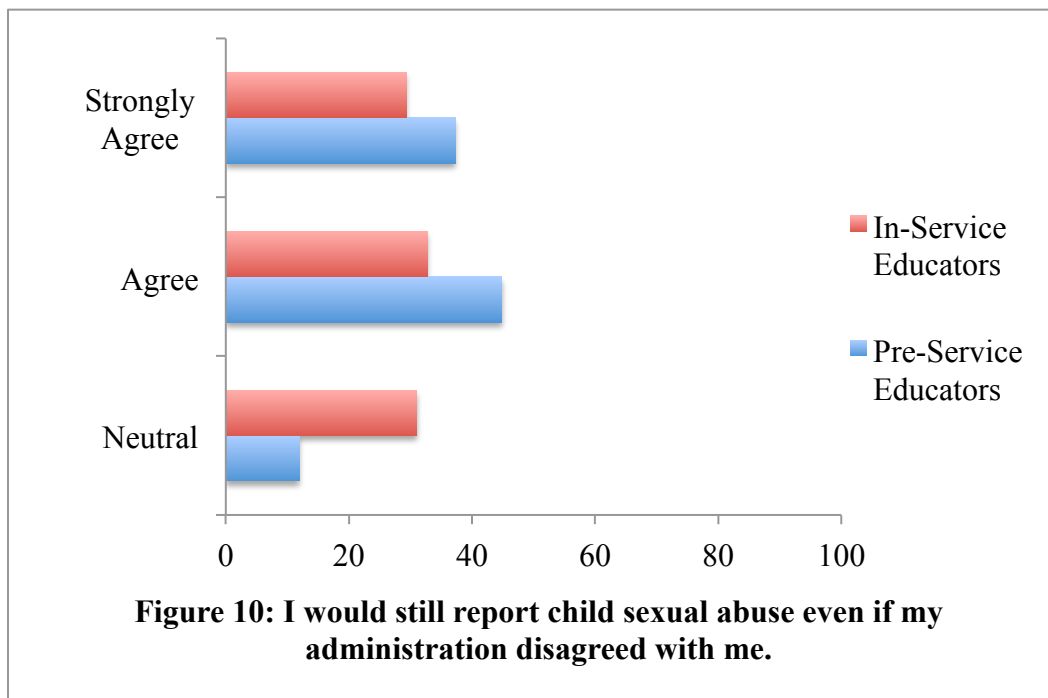
**Statement 4.3.3: I would like to fulfill my professional responsibility by reporting suspected cases of child sexual abuse. (Figure 9)**

A majority of pre- and in-service teachers (82.09% and 84.48%, respectively) “Strongly Agree.” 16.42% of pre-service teachers chose “Agree”; in-service teachers followed a similar pattern: 10.34% “Agree.”



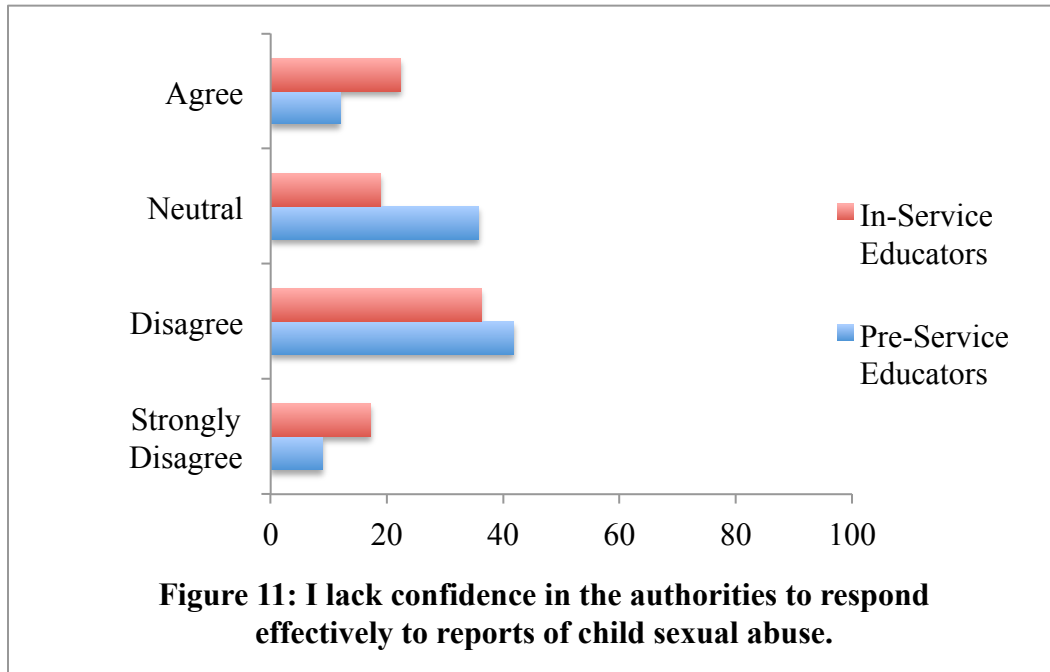
**Statement 4.3.4: I would still report child sexual abuse even if my administration disagreed with me. (Figure 10)**

Most pre-service participants selected “Strongly Agree” (37.31%) or “Agree” (44.78%); 11.94% chose “Neutral.” In contrast, only 29.31% of in-service teachers reported “Strongly Agree”; a majority of participants selected either “Agree” or “Neutral.”



**Statement 4.3.5: I lack confidence in the authorities to respond effectively to reports of child sexual abuse. (Figure 11)**

For pre-service teachers, the answers consisted mostly of “Neutral” (35.82%) and “Disagree” (41.79%), with 11.94% of responses being “Agree”; 8.96% chose “Strongly Disagree.” As for in-service educators, 22.41% of participants “Agree” with the statement; 36.21% “Disagree”; 17.24% “Strongly Disagree,” and 18.97% declared “Neutral.”



## Discussion

Overall, the results of the survey reveal that, ultimately, pre- and in-service educators' show a dedication to their duties as mandatory reporters. While there is a general consensus for most of the statements, some of them – like 4.3.2 and 4.3.5 – display a wide range of answers. This distinction can be attributed to the difference in the amount of experience between pre- and in-service teachers; actively working in the field of education alongside students, parents, colleagues, and administrators forces an individual to make decisions that are potentially different that he or she would wish it to be.

There is no accurate way to account for the similarities and differences between the answers given by pre- and in-service teachers, and there is no “correct” choice by which responses can be judged. A participant’s own experiences with the issue of child

sexual abuse – whether as a survivor, friend of a survivor, reporter, or a lack of exposure – will have influenced his or her responses to the statements; the participant may view his or her school’s surrounding community behind a veil of trepidation instead of trust. The primary concern of the researcher is not *why* the participants reacted the way they did, but *how* these attitudes and beliefs potentially influence a victim’s disclosure to his or her teacher.

According to Hinkelman and Bruno (2008), “professionals respond to child sexual abuse based on their education and experience with child sexual abuse cases, the age and gender of the child, and their attitudes toward the victim and perpetrator” (p. 381); the pair of researchers also found that approximately 59% of mental health, law enforcement, and school professionals attribute some of the responsibility for the abuse to child victims. The data gathered in the survey for this study vastly differs in many cases between pre- and in-service teachers. In many instances, the reason for this was the amount of experience between teachers who have been in the field for at least a year as opposed to undergraduates who have yet to finish their educations.

Child sexual abuse affects the victim not only physically but emotionally as well, and, for some, the scars never truly heal; victims’ mannerisms are often found to be self-destructive, whether they exhibit delinquent behavior or develop addictions to harmful substances. Child sexual abuse also influences the victims’ school life. Darkness to Light (2006) found that 39% of girls had academic difficulties: 50% of female victims were more likely to display cognitive ability below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile; 26% reported grades dropping after abuse and 48% had below average grades. Both males and females face an increased chance of dropping out of school completely; however, in some cases, child

victims may take on the role of the overachiever or the perfectionist as a way to cope with the strain brought on by the abuse (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008).

Educators, counselors, and administrators make approximately 52% of all reports (Darkness to Light, 2006). Why is this number not higher? Members of the school faculty are in the presence of potential victims at least thirty-five hours a week; in some cases, the students may see their teachers more than their own parents. According to the results of the survey distributed by the researcher, many pre-service – and some in-service – teachers do not have a working knowledge of how to apply the legislation pertaining to child abuse and neglect, such as the duty to inform and the immunity granted to a reporter acting in good faith, to preventing and detecting child sexual abuse. For a few of the participants, there is a lack of faith in the current system to effectively help the children that are reported; others do not wish to act against the wishes of their administration. Many pre-service teachers admitted to not being familiar with how to detect or report suspected child abuse.

Based on a review of the existing literature, the solution to the problem of low teacher reporting is based in relationships and training. Interventionary knowledge, skills, and competencies regarding child abuse and neglect should be taught to pre-service teachers; however, there is little literature that identifies *what* content pre-service teachers encounter. A review of existing literature lends itself to the conclusion that a combination of professionally guided scenarios including a conceptual understanding of content, connections between learning and personal experiences, and evaluative procedures is most helpful in moving pre-service teachers toward confident practice. For in-service teachers, the introduction of child sexual abuse prevention programs into the regular



curriculum may be the most useful approach. McIntyre and Carr (1999) found that victims of child sexual abuse who had previously participated in a specific school-based prevention program were more likely to have reported, told teachers, and have reports substantiated; however it is unknown if actual risk or the likelihood of abuse is reported or prevented (Brassard and Fiorvanti, 2015).

According to Gallagher-Mackay (2014), “strong research suggests that teachers’ relationships with students are not only inevitable but an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning, alongside high expectations and academic press” (p. 261). These relationships provide teachers the opportunities to provide guidance and support to their students, allowing them to play a pivotal role in the prevention of child maltreatment (Daro et al., 1992). Teachers must *know* their students – their personalities, their likes and dislikes – to know when something is not right with a child; relationships between teachers and students are inevitable. It is how those relationships are utilized that makes all the difference in a child’s life.

After observing the data gathered in the survey, the researcher concludes that both the pre- and in-service educators that were interviewed have fostered healthy relationships with their current and past students. These relationships have most likely effectively allowed the educators, particularly in-service, to successfully report their suspicions of child sexual abuse amongst their students. This confidence will allow the pre-service educators to do the same once they enter the field. However, it must be taken into account that participants are likely to be more confident answering positively than taking action in reality.

## **Implications and Areas for Further Research**

According to Walsh et al. (2010), the survey used by the researcher has its own limitations, as described in Chapter III. The researcher believes further testing described as necessary by Walsh et al. could be accomplished through distributing the survey to more teacher education programs as well as public and private elementary, middle, and high schools within the state of Mississippi. The development of a survey for students in Mississippi could determine barriers to disclosure that may prove unique to the state or help advance previous knowledge about barriers to disclosure.

Including a survey to distribute amongst students would prove useful for gathering data concerning student disclosure to school faculty and staff. An anonymous questionnaire dispersed to all students, regardless of their experience with child sexual abuse, would allow for further anonymity for victims who have not yet disclosed and are unsure about doing so. However, there are a few obstacles to such a study. The first is the age of the students since most participants would classify as minors under United States law, therefore requiring the consent of potentially unwilling parents or guardians. The sensitive and controversial nature of such a study would dissuade many caretakers from allowing their wards to participate – especially in a state like Mississippi where open discussions of sex and sexuality still remain taboo in many areas.

A second complication is student apathy. Conveying the importance of such a study to students – no matter their age – could prove difficult. Many most likely would not take the survey seriously, resulting in skewed data, if they even chose to participate at all. Other students, particularly those who may be victims or know a victim, may not be entirely honest in their responses, also resulting in skewed data.

A third difficulty to further study is the school, which may be hesitant to allow researchers to conduct a study involving the competency – or lack thereof – of their teachers to report child sexual abuse. Many of the questions in the survey directly pertain to a participant's faith in the school and administration to properly resolve the issue should it be brought to their attention. Other questions determine the participants' knowledge of reporting laws in their state and the procedures in place within the school; if schools are aware that they failed to train their teachers properly, administrators are far less likely to allow researchers to investigate their employees' insufficient knowledge.

## **Chapter V: Conclusion**

Today's media is filled with accounts of child sexual abuse, from the U.S.A. Gymnastics team doctor, Larry Nassar, to former Pennsylvania State University football coach, Jerry Sandusky, to that one next-door neighbor who, by all accounts, seemed perfectly normal. Darkness to Light (2006) estimates that 400,000 of the children born every year in the United States will fall victims to child sexual abuse; of those 400,000, 30% of victims will be abused by members of their own family, 60% by trusted family friends, and only 10% by strangers. These children face terrible abuses alone, without protection. Society always responds appropriately, with horror and anger, yet children continue to be subjected to abuse and maltreatment. No race, religion, or socioeconomic class is free of child sexual abuse.

Perpetrators are responsible, of course, but all of society has played a role in the suffering of these children. Neighbors, parents, and professionals alike lack the training – even, on occasion, the will – to recognize the signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse. Victimized children are forced to carry the weight of their abuse on their own small shoulders. As survivor Guerry Glover stated, “You don’t realize the little ropes are being put on until all of a sudden you can’t move. You’ve got this horrible secret, and it’s all your fault, and you can’t tell anybody” (Darkness to Light, 2014).

However, with training and awareness, there will come a shift in the statistics. As more people become cognizant of the signs of abuse and willing to make a stand, fewer children will face victimization. Resources are readily available for those who are

directly faced with suspicions of child sexual abuse or for those who seek to educate themselves and others (Appendix C). For the sake of children all over the world, people must be willing to actively make a stand for what is right for the children. They do not deserve to be dismissed and ignored as they have.

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## Appendix A

Twenty-One Item Self-Report Teachers' Reporting Attitude Scale for Child Sexual Abuse In Relation to Reporting Child Sexual Abuse, to What Extent do you Agree or Disagree With the Following Statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) I plan to report child sexual abuse when I suspect it.					
b) I would be apprehensive to report child sexual abuse for fear of family/community retaliation.					
c) I would be reluctant to report a case of child sexual abuse because of what parents will do to the child if he or she is reported.					
d) The procedures for reporting child sexual abuse are familiar to me.					
e) I would like to fulfill my professional responsibility by reporting suspected cases of child sexual abuse.					
f) Reporting child sexual abuse is necessary for the safety of children.					
g) I feel emotionally overwhelmed by the thought of reporting child sexual abuse.					

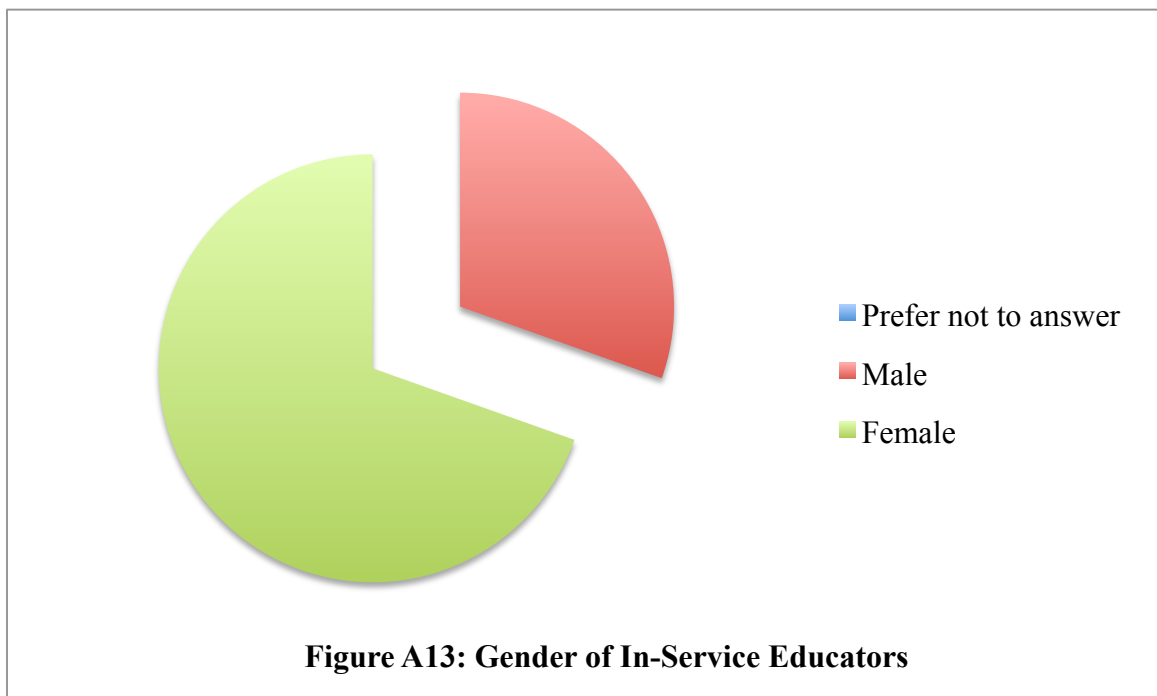
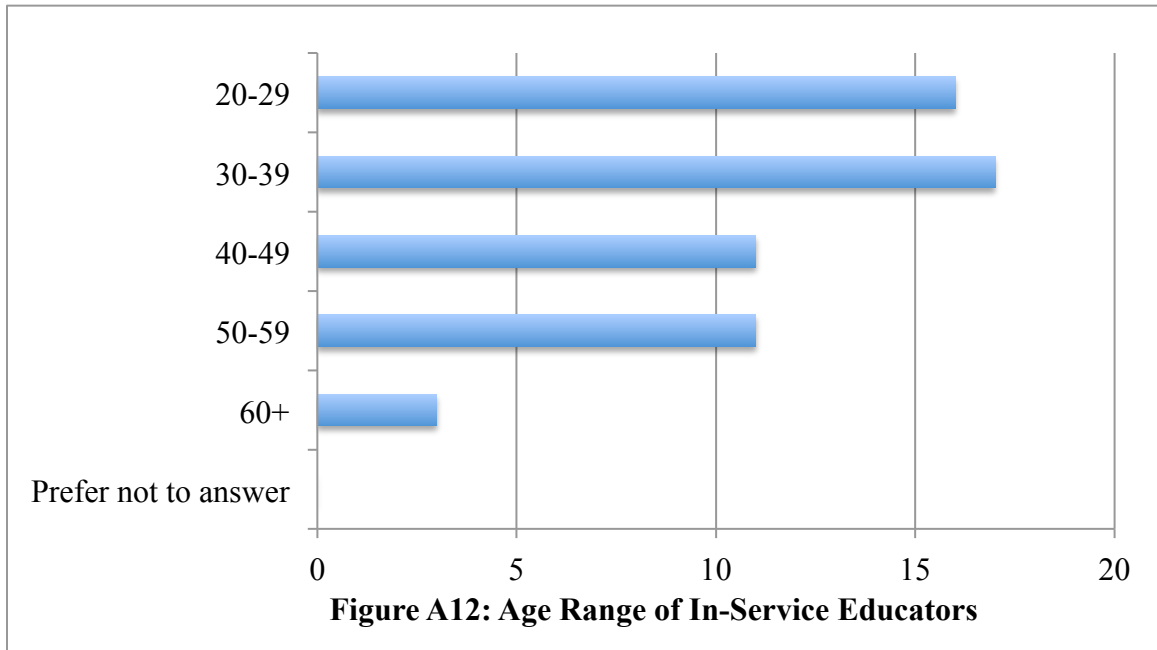
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
h) I would not report child sexual abuse if I knew the child would be removed from his or her home/family.					
i) Reporting child sexual abuse can enable services to be made available to children and families.					
j) I would consider not reporting child sexual abuse because of the possibility of being sued.					
k) There is a lot of sensitivity associated with reporting child sexual abuse.					
l) Child sexual abuse reporting guidelines are necessary for teachers.					
m) It is important for teachers to be involved in reporting child sexual abuse to prevent long-term consequences for children.					
n) I believe that the current system for reporting child sexual abuse is effective in addressing the problem.					
o) Teachers who report child sexual abuse that is unsubstantiated can get into trouble.					

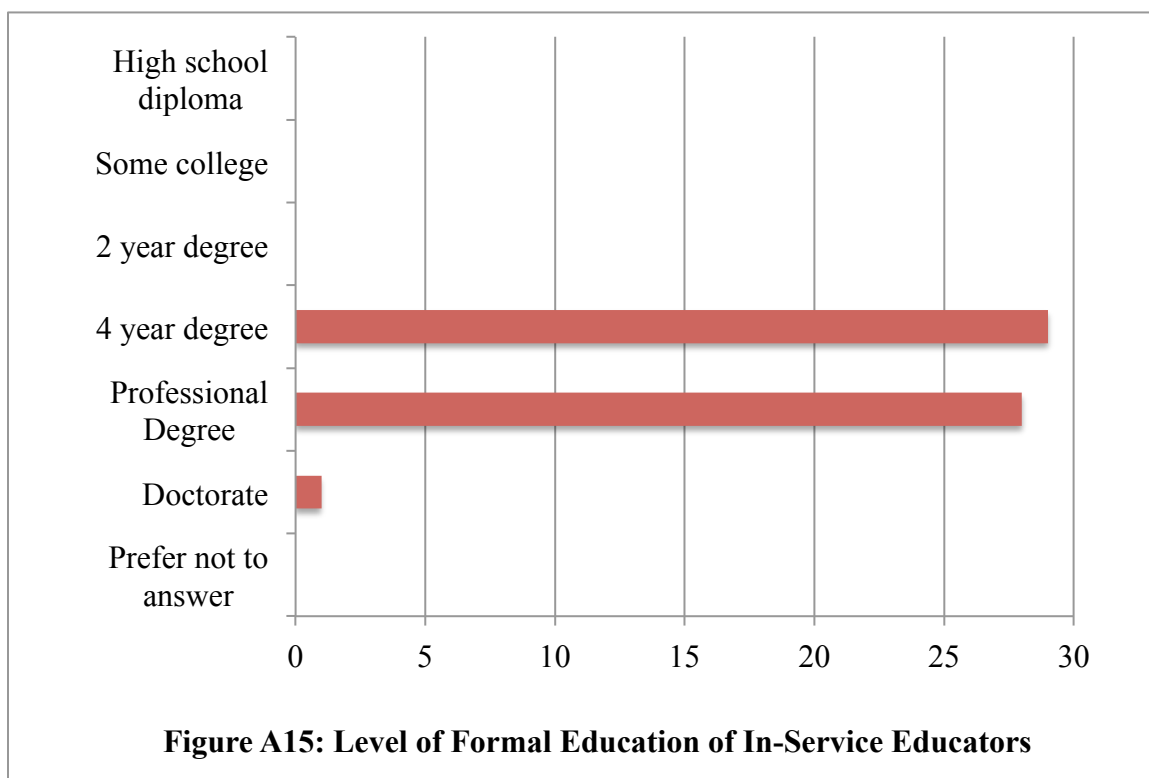
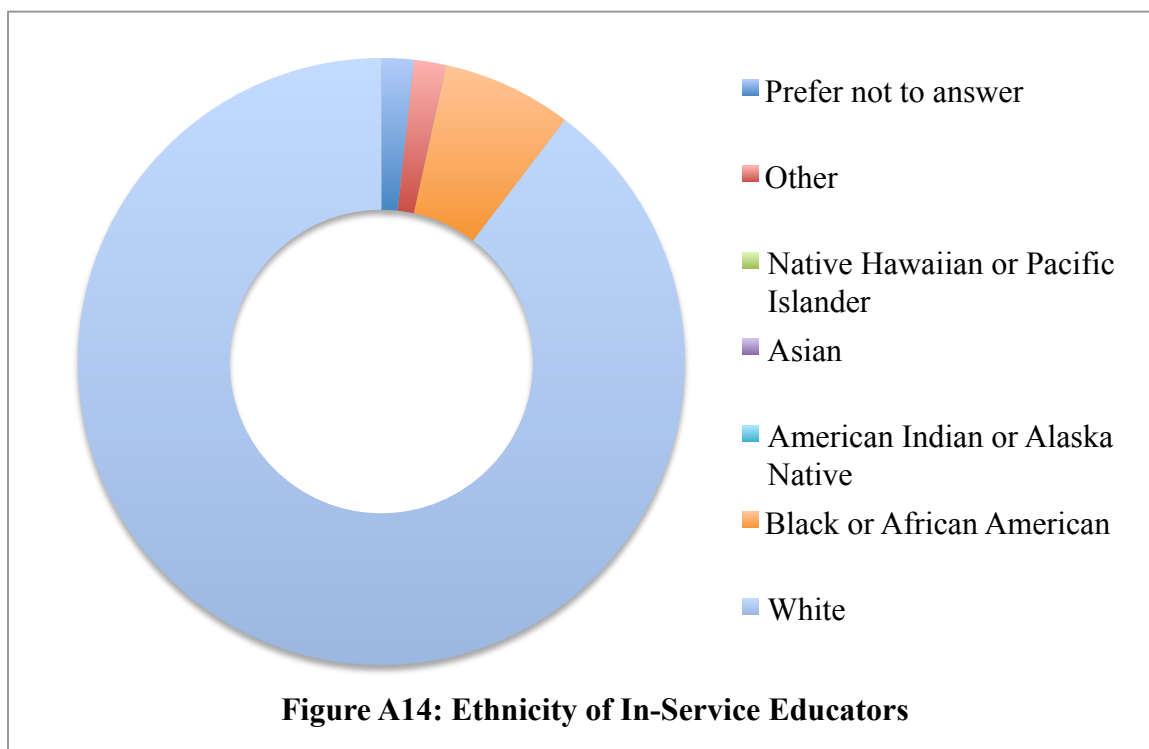
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
p) It is a waste of time to report child sexual abuse because no one will follow up on the report.					
q) I would still report child sexual abuse even if my school administration disagreed with me.					
r) I lack confidence in the authorities to respond effectively to reports of child sexual abuse.					
s) I will consult with an administrator before I report child sexual abuse.					
t) I would find it difficult to report child sexual abuse because it is hard to gather enough evidence.					
u) A child sexual abuse report can cause a parent to become more abusive toward the child.					

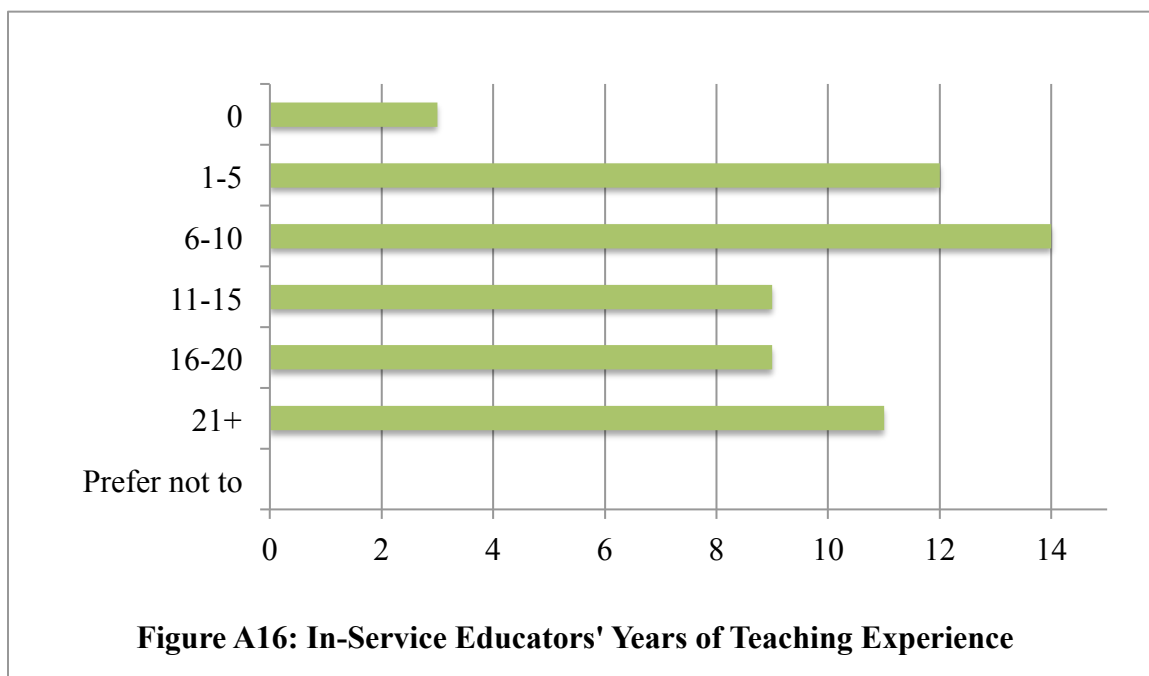
## Appendix B

### Survey Participant Demographics

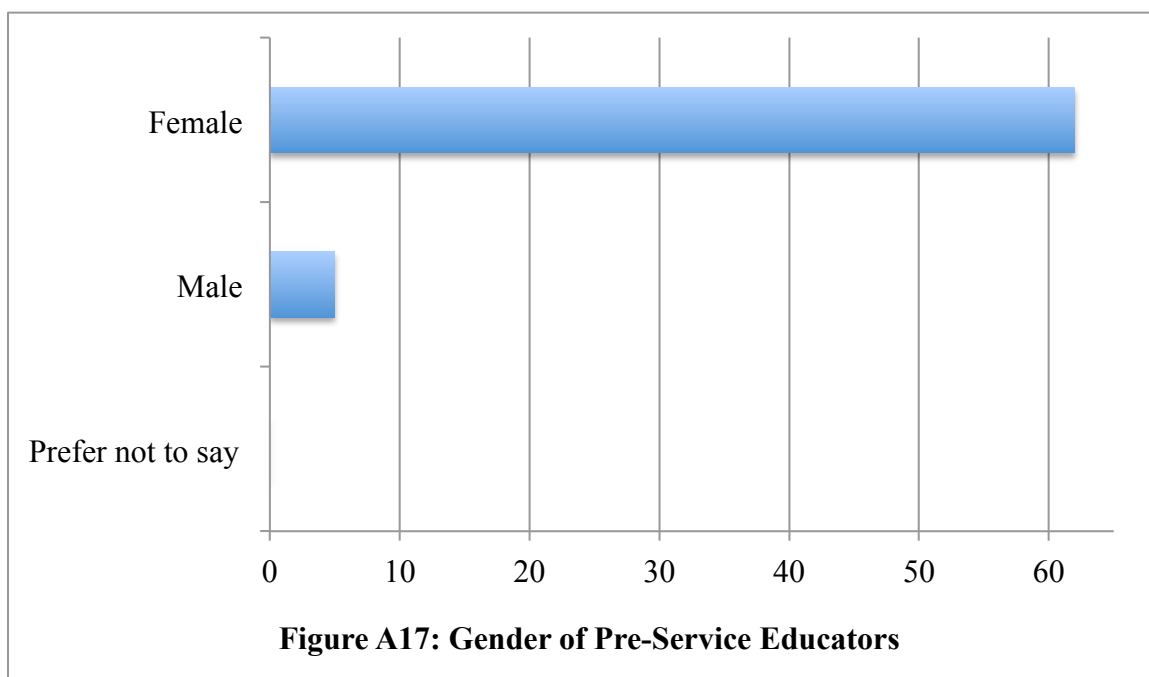
#### In-Service Educators

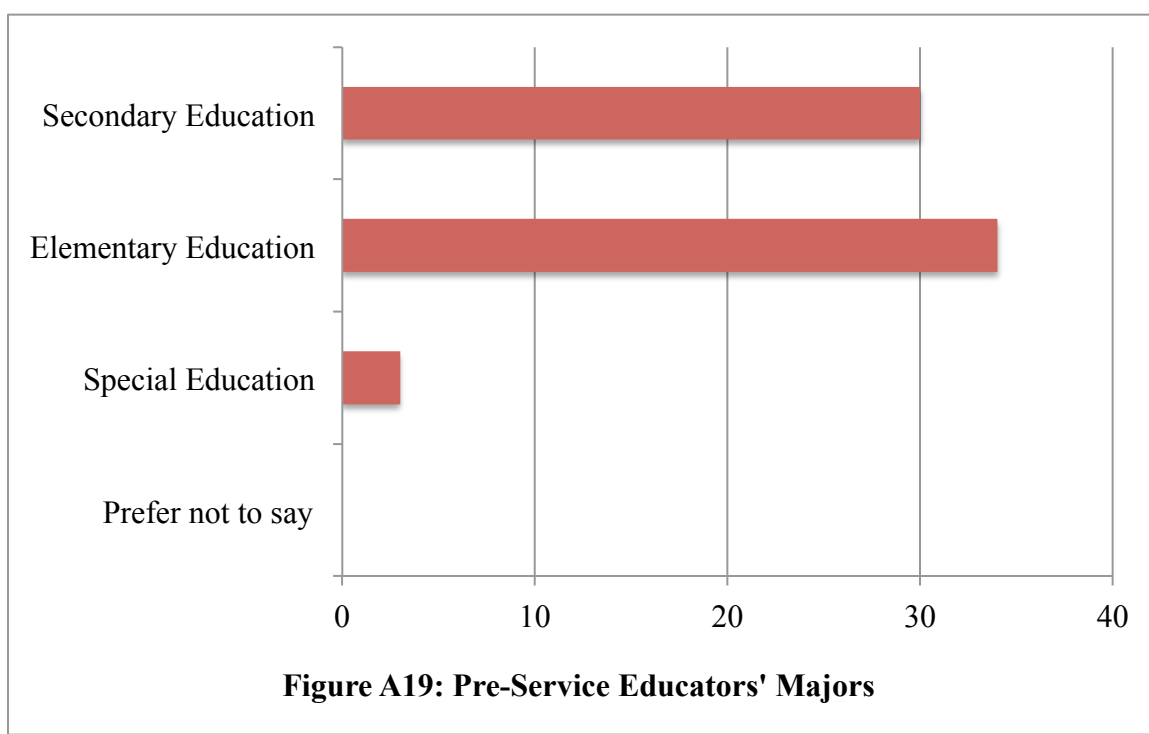
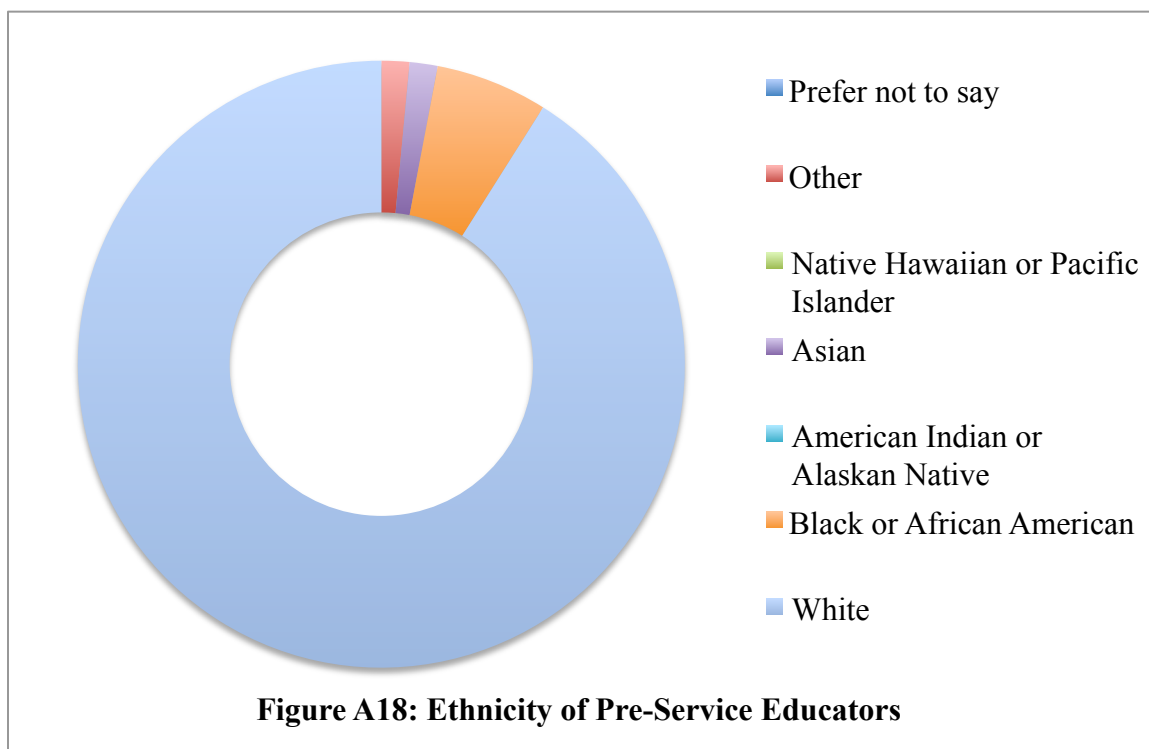




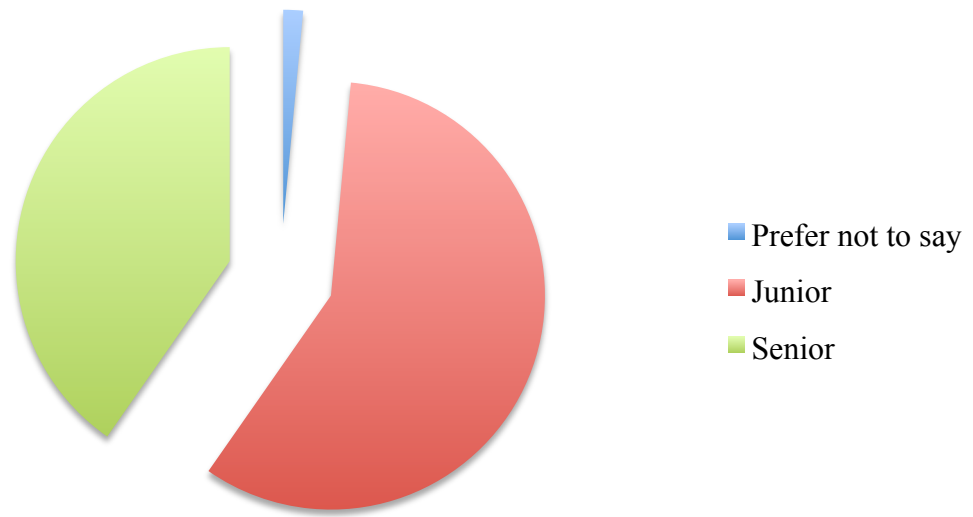


### Pre-Service Educators

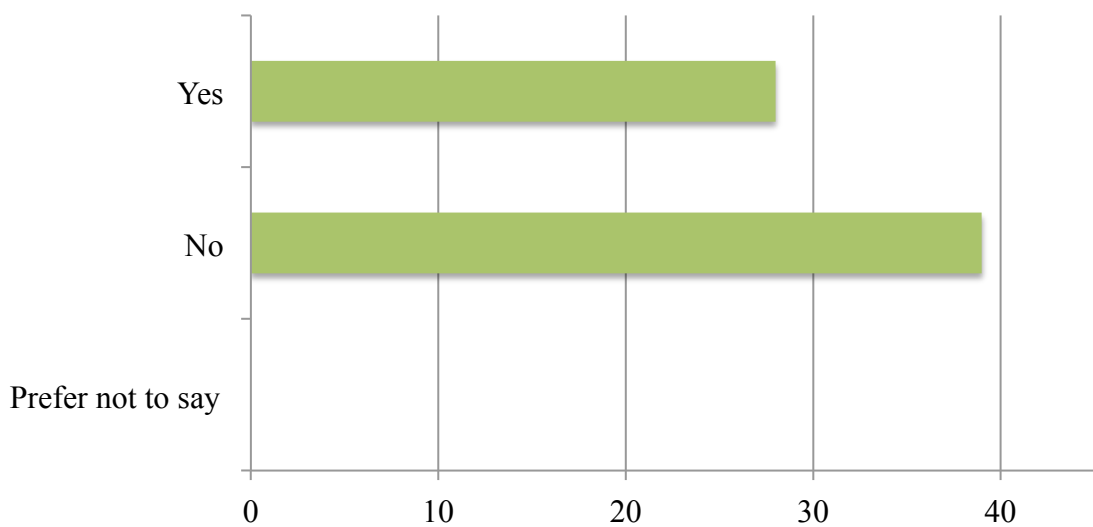








**Figure A20: Pre-Service Educators' Current Academic Standing**



**Figure A21: Have pre-service educators received child sexual abuse prevention/intervention training?**

## Appendix C

### Recruitment Emails and Consent to Participate Forms

#### **Recruitment Email for Principals of Middle and High Schools**

[PRINCIPAL'S NAME]:

My name is Marjorie Cox, and I am a senior education major at the University of Mississippi. I am contacting you in the interest of my Honors College thesis research; I would like to send a survey to your [GRADE LEVEL] teachers regarding their attitudes and beliefs toward reporting child sexual abuse. Below, I have attached a document version of the survey; the official survey that the teachers would receive is through Qualtrics, which is used by the University of Mississippi. I have also attached a letter of consent, also to be included if I am allowed to contact your employees. The university's Institutional Review Board has approved both the survey and the letter of consent.

If you are amenable, I only need the names of your [GRADE LEVEL] teachers, since their email addresses are listed on the [SCHOOL NAME] website.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [CONTACT INFORMATION].

Thank you for your time,

Marjorie Cox

#### **Recruitment Email for In-Service Educators**

Dear Mississippi Educator,

My name is Marjorie Cox, and I am a senior Secondary English Education major at the University of Mississippi. I am currently conducting a study about teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward reporting child sexual abuse. I am emailing you to ask that you take

10 minutes to complete a survey. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary; your answers will remain anonymous.

If you are interested, please read the Consent to Participate document attached to this email to ensure that you fully understand the purpose of this study, its risks and benefits, your right to confidentiality, and your right to withdraw from the survey. Once you have done so, follow this link to access the survey: [SURVEY LINK]

The survey will close on November 1, 2017.

This survey has been approved by the University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board and your principal, [PRINCIPAL NAME]. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at [CONTACT INFORMATION].

Thank you for your time,

Marjorie Cox

### **Recruitment Email for Pre-Service Educators**

Dear University of Mississippi Student,

My name is Marjorie Cox, and I am a senior Secondary English Education major here at the University of Mississippi. I am currently conducting a study about teacher education majors' beliefs and attitudes toward reporting child sexual abuse. I am emailing you to ask that you take 15 minutes to complete a survey. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary; your answers will remain anonymous.

If you are interested, please read the Consent to Participate document attached to this email to ensure that you fully understand the purpose of this study, its risks and

benefits, your right to confidentiality, and your right to withdraw from the survey. Once you have done so, follow this link to access the survey: [SURVEY LINK]

The survey will expire on October 31, 2017.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at [CONTACT INFORMATION].

Thank you for your time,

Marjorie Cox

### **Consent to Participate Form**

**Title:** Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs toward Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

#### **Researcher**

Marjorie Cox  
School of Education  
Guyton Hall  
The University of Mississippi  
mmcox1@go.olemiss.edu

#### **Advisor**

Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham, Ph.D.  
School of Education  
331 Guyton Hall  
The University of Mississippi  
ringham@olemiss.edu

☐ *By checking this box I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.*

### **Description**

The purpose of this survey is to determine the attitudes and beliefs of Mississippi teachers and teacher education majors at Mississippi universities toward reporting child sexual abuse. This study is one component of a larger research project being conducted to establish the preparedness of teachers and education majors to report child sexual abuse and the potential effects such preparedness or lack thereof has on rates of abuse disclosure in victims.

### **Cost and Payments**

The survey should take at least 15 minutes to complete. Participation does not require payment of any kind, nor will you be compensated for completing the survey.

### **Risks and Benefits**

The content of the survey may make some participants uncomfortable as it deals with the sensitive issue of child sexual abuse. By taking part in this study, you make it possible for

the researcher to spread awareness of child sexual abuse as well as the attitudes and beliefs concerning the reporting of child sexual abuse that are held by current employees of the Mississippi Department of Education and those students from Mississippi universities who plan to enter the field of education.

**Confidentiality**

No identifiable information – such as name, address, present place of employment or schooling – will be recorded; all survey answers will be recorded anonymously.

**Right to Withdraw**

You are under no obligation to take part in this study and you may stop participating at any time. If you begin the survey and decide that you do not wish to finish, you may close your browser. If you want to continue with the survey but feel uncomfortable answering a question, you may select “prefer not to answer” during the first section of the survey. If you experience discomfort during the second section of the survey, you may select “neutral.”

**IRB Approval**

This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or [irb@olemiss.edu](mailto:irb@olemiss.edu).

**Statement of Consent**

I have read and understand the above information. By completing the survey/interview I consent to participate in the study.

## Appendix D

### Resources for Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

#### **National Children's Alliance: 202.548.0090**

National Children's Alliance is a professional membership organization dedicated to helping local communities respond to allegations of child abuse in ways that are effective and efficient – and put the needs of child victims first.

**<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org>**

#### **Darkness to Light: 1-866-FOR-LIGHT or text LIGHT to 741741**

Darkness to Light provides a toll-free number for individuals living in the United States who need local information and resources about sexual abuse. Any individual, child, or adult who needs resources about sexual abuse can call the helpline. All calls are confidential and will be answered by a trained information and referral representative.

**<https://www.d2l.org/>**

#### **Stop it Now!: 1-888-PREVENT**

Stop it Now! provides a national helpline for adults living in the United States who are concerned for the safety of a child and do not know what to do. All calls are confidential and will be answered by knowledgeable professionals in the field of child sexual abuse prevention. **<http://www.stopitnow.org/>**

### **The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD**

The Childhelp National Abuse Hotline is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. The hotline is staffed 24/7 with professional crisis counselors who, through interpreters, can provide assistance in 170 languages; the hotline offers crisis intervention, information, literature, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls are anonymous and confidential. <https://www.childhelp.org/>

### **Hopeline:1-800-SUICIDE**

The Hopeline Network brings together the knowledge and critical services of existing Crisis Centers.

<http://www.centerforsuicideawareness.org/services/hopeline/about.html>

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK**

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. The Lifeline's national network of local crisis centers provide crisis counseling and mental health referrals. <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

### **Rainn National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE**

An anti-sexual assault organization that operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline. <https://www.rainn.org/>

**Children of the Night Hotline: 1-800-551-1300**

The Children of the Night home is open to child prostitutes, and the hotline is ready to rescue these children 24 hours a day. Children of the Night provides free taxi/airline transportation nationwide for America's child prostitutes who wish to escape prostitution.

**<https://www.childrenofthenight.org/>**

**SNAP Network: 1-877-SNAP-HEALS**

Survivor Network of those Abused by Priest (SNAP) is an independent, confidential network of survivors of institutional sexual abuse and their supporters who work to protect the vulnerable, heal the wounded, and expose the truth.

**<http://www.snapnetwork.org/>**

**Office for Victims of Crime**

Office for Victims of Crime provides an online Directory of Crime Victim Services, a resource designed to help service providers and individuals locate non-emergency crime victim service agencies in the United States and abroad. **<https://www.ovc.gov/>**

**Find-a-Therapist**

This organization offers a solution to the problem of connecting people to the right therapist as a Web-based provider of services for mental health professionals and their clients. **<http://www.find-a-therapist.com/>**



## **1in6**

The mission of 1in6 is to help men who have had unwanted or abusive sexual experiences live healthier, happier lives. 1in6 provides information and support resources online and in the community. **<https://1in6.org/>**

## **Male Survivor**

Provides articles and a list of therapists who specialize in helping men who were sexually abused as children. **<https://www.malesurvivor.org>**

## **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children provides assistance to parents, children, law enforcement, schools, and the community to recover missing children and raising public awareness about how to prevent child abduction, molestation, and sexual exploitation. **<http://www.missingkids.com/home>**

## **Statutes for Child Abuse and Neglect**

Child Welfare Information Gateway provides the state statutes for child abuse and neglect. **<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>**

## **Justice for Children**

The purpose of Justice for Children is to provide a full range of advocacy and services for abused and neglected children; that includes pro-bono legal advocacy, public policy monitoring, guidance through a complex child protective system, professional referrals,

mental health services, court watch, research, education, and emotional support.

**<https://justiceforchildren.org/>**

### **National Organization for Victim Assistance**

An organization of victim and witness assistance programs and practitioners, criminal justice agencies and professionals, medical health professionals, researchers, former victims and survivors, along with other committed to the recognition and implementation of victim rights and services. **<https://www.trynova.org/>**

### **National Association to Protect Children**

PROTECT lobbies for legislation that protects children from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. **<https://www.protect.org/>**

### **Court Appointed Special Advocates**

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, together with its state and local member programs, supports and promotes court-appointed volunteer advocacy so every abused or neglected child in the United States can be safe, have a permanent home, and the opportunity to thrive.

**<http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/b.5301295/k.BE9A/Home.htm>**